THE GIRL IN CHECKS;

OR,

THE MYSTERY OF THE MOUNTAIN CABIN.

BY REV. J. W. DANIEL.

PRICE 75 CENTS.

L. L. PICKETT,
COLUMBIA, S. C.
1892.

TO

My Aged Father and Mother,

TO WHOM, UNDER DIVINE GRACE, I OWE EVERY THING,

AND TO

My Beloved Wife and Children,

THE JOY OF MY LIFE,

I Lovingly Dedicate This Volume.

AUTHOR.

NOTICE.

The scenes and thoughts recorded on these pages have struggled within me for utterance. I have given them to whosoever shall read this volume. I believe they will stimulate thought on the part of the reader, and prove suggestive to every earnest heart.

I have no apology to make for any thing within these pages. The scenes, anecdotes, and incidents have been drawn from real life; many of them are true. I am free to say the book contains more "truth than poetry," no matter how poorly expressed. Author.

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THE GIRL IN CHECKS.

CHAPTER I.

BOYHOOD'S VISION REALIZED.

BLUE jeans and cottonade checks, as articles of apparel, are as inseparably connected with the people inhabiting the mountain-ranges of Upper Carolina as the provincialisms of their "cracker" dialect. Indeed, there seems to be an "eternal fitness" existing between the mountaineer and his toilet. He appears as much out of place clad in broadcloth or other fabrics as a woman at the mast's head. Four things, from some cause, have been indissolubly joined together: home-raised tobacco, clay pipes, blue jeans, and the mountaineer.

In early boyhood I have stood many a time in the long, old-fashioned piazza of the old

mansion at the homestead in Laurens County, and watched, with a great deal of childish interest and with no small degree of curiosity, the long trains of covered wagons pass along the public highway leading from the mountains via Greenville, S. C., which was then a small town, to Augusta, Ga., which in those days was the great emporium of the mountain trade of Western North and South Carolina. The sturdy mountaineer hauled the scant produce of his farm, chiefly apples and chestnuts, across the vast stretch of intervening country, and there exchanged it for those commodities which he could not otherwise procure.

The wagons, in companies of eight or ten, were generally drawn by either four or six mules; and very frequently there was attached to the top of the hames a frame containing a number of tiny bells, which kept up a continuous jingle as the teams moved along the highway. The wagons were covered with great white sheets of Osnaburgs stretched over a wooden bow-frame. Feed-troughs were attached to the rear gates of the great curved

bodies, and were, while moving, the receptacle of the cooking utensils, which kept up a perfect medley of any thing but harmonious sounds as the great wagons jolted over the rough roads. A large wooden tar-bucket was suspended from the center of the rear axle, and frequently a savage-looking dog trotted along under the wagon-bed, having been trained to move and stop with the vehicle. The driver kept his place in the saddle day after day, and the swaying motion of his body diagonally from side to side corresponded precisely with the strides of the draught beast upon which he sat. The loud *crack* of his whip sounded like the report of a rifle, and to me it was always the signal of an approaching train. Therefore mountain wagons and costumes, together with the odor of mellow apples, tar, and home-raised tobacco smoke, were indelibly stamped on memory's page.

I frequently dreamed of orchards hanging with great red apples, of mountains a great deal higher than the steep hills down by the ravine, and of many things, indeed, which my

childish imagination associated with the region from which these mountaineers came. So that in January, 1880, as my faithful horse climbed the steep acclivities of the mountain spurs of Upper South Carolina, notwithstanding it had been a long time since my eyes and nostrils had come into contact with the things mentioned in the first part of this paragraph, I as readily recognized them as if they had been the faces of familiar friends. But these *familiars* were destined soon to be associated with scenes and mysteries altogether new and thoroughly perplexing to me.

Tom Thaxton's name was on the *plan* of my circuit. He was one of the stewards of Flat Rock Church. He lived somewhere in the vicinity of the far-famed Table Rock. The bleak perpendicular sides of that stupendous mass of granite had already greeted my view for several hours, and now I clambered along almost at its very base. I knew by my proximity to this wonderful freak of nature that I was nearing my journey's end, for Tom Thaxton's home was my destination. "Will you be kind

enough to direct me to the home of Mr. Thaxton?" I said to a tall, cadaverous-looking man whom I chanced to meet in the highway.

Bringing the breech of his old-fashioned rifle to the ground with a *thump* that made the ramrod quiver and rattle in its receiver as if it had been subjected to an electric shock, and pushing his slouch woolen hat far back on his head, he replied: "Beant you one of them revenue fellows?"

Having assured him that I was not, I again sought the desired information. But my inquiry was again met by a reply that in nowise pertained to the matter in hand.

"Stranger, yer 'pears to be mighty fresh in these here parts, but yer look like yer mout hold a purty fa'r hand in an argimint. I han't hearn a reg'lar knock-down vilification of the way the gov'mint's a tryin' to regerlate people's private concerns since the baptizin' down at 'Possum Creek las' summer. Col. Goodman was down thar', an' th Karnel's a powerful knowin' man too, an' bein a can'idate for the legislatur', the Karnel was mighty talka-

tive. He got strung out, as we was settin' on them logs beyant the meetin' house thess 'fore sarvice begun, on the way the gov'mint's tryin' to make ev'ry man turn out his crap an' fence his cattle. His first pint was, sezee: 'The dum brutes was put outside when they was made; why,' sezee, 'beca'se the rattlesnakes would take this country ef the hogs was not outside to eat up their aigs an' young uns.'' This second pint was 'bout them lean cows Pharaoh saw a commin' outen the river. The Karnel's pow'ful well-read in the Scriptur', an' he showed us that the dum' brutes would perish, all hemmed up in pastur', an' he made it mighty clare that the Scripture was a law. His third pint was, sezee: 'The land in the pastur's would be ruined by the cattle a trampin' over it in wet weather, an'' sezee, 'the country would soon become so poor that two men couldn't raise a fuss on a forty acre field, let alone sprout a pea.' I tell you it was a master argiment, an' he went to the Legislatur' too, you better believe it, old hoss; it were that talk that 'lected the Karnel as

shoar's you are a born stranger to these digin's. Say, fureigner, you han't hearn how the Karnel is gettin' on fightin' that stock law, have you?"

Seizing an opportunity just here, I told my loquacious friend that the Colonel would, in all probability, secure an exemption for that section of the State from the bill that was then pending in the Legislature; and hoping to turn the current of his conversation into the desired channel, I ventured the assertion that the mountainous surface of the country would make it impossible to fence in a sufficient area to pasture a large herd of cattle in any one place, and therefore that there was no danger whatever of the bill becoming a law for that portion of the State.

"Correct, shoar's I'm a livin' man," exclaimed the mountaineer. "Say, new-comer, you han't runnin' fur no office, are you? That idee of yourn would 'lect a man to the Senate shoar's you are a born son of your daddy."

He twisted his thin beard, meditatively,

shifted his gun to the other side, pushed his slouch hat still further back on his shaggy head, and continued: "You tote good idees an' wear store clothes an' say you an't one of them revenue fellows, nor han't runnin' for no office nuther; you mystifies a body. Would you mind tellin' where you come from an' what's your business in these parts?"

Of course I gave the honest inquirer the desired information, emphasizing my special business at that moment—viz., to find the way to Tom Thaxton's house.

"Well, you han't fur from Tom Thaxton's now; he lives right on this road an' about two miles from this p'int. Tom's a mighty good nabor, an' thar an't but one thing that can be said agin him, and that is he han't got right an' proper view an' idees concernin' the Scriptur'. I'm a preacher of the gospel myself, but I han't the man to fall out with a fellow 'cause he can't see as I see, specially with a fellow that has 'nough hoss-sense to see what's for the good o' the country. Goodby, circuous-rider. But hold on; would you

mind givin' a fellow-laborer your paw in the right hand of fellowship *for the good o' the country?* 'Tain't no use in bein' strangers, if we can't 'zactly gine hands in religion."

I gave his reverence the desired boon, and hastened up the mountain-side, determined in my heart to ask no one else the way to Tom Thaxton's house until I had exhausted every other effort to find the place of my destination. I had gone but a little distance when the narrow road began its tortuous descent into a broad, beautiful valley. Through this valley one branch of the prattling Saluda swept its way, its waters struggling apparently to get out from under the shadow of the great granite cliffs that towered heavenward on every side. On the west the valley was bounded by Table Rock Mountain. The north-east side was shut in by a long range of broken, craggy mountains, spurs of the great Blue Ridge. The northern end of the valley seemed to gradually lose itself among the far-away blue mountains that arose pile upon pile until they seemed to jut against the sky itself. South-

ward there were quite a number of little mountains, oval-shaped, which dotted the widening expanse of country, and which, from their shape, might have been very appropriately christened the "Potato-hills of the Giants." The valley thus shut in was dotted here and there with crude dwelling-houses, which resembled, from the eminence upon which I stood, so many chicken coops in a barn-yard with miniature chimneys attached thereto.

Passing down into this secluded valley, there came over me a feeling of isolation and loneliness—

> So lonely 'twas, that God himself
> Scarce seemed there to be.

Looking back over the "Potato-hills of the Giants," which shut me in from the broad, undulatory plains of my former days, a heavy shadow came over my soul, for they seemed to rise up fixed, impassable barriers between me and the old home of my boyhood days. So repulsive was the impression that I looked not again behind me.

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round, walks on
And turns no more his head,
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

The granite hills of Table Rock to my left looked down on me defiantly. The towering, rock-ribbed hills to my right and in front seemed to whisper triumphantly: "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther."

Reader, hast thou ever descended *alone* the precipitous declivities of some towering mountain into the isolated vale beneath, while the thoughts of loved ones miles away filled thy heart? Hast thou ever experienced that depressed feeling of isolation that creeps over the soul amid the death-like silence that pervades the coves and glens of these "everlasting hills," and produces that acute and indescribable sense of loneliness? Hast thou, like the "Sweet Singer of Israel," ever been *alone* in the vale?

> *Alone!* that worn-out word,
> So idly and so coldly heard;
> Yet all that poets sing, and grief hath known,
> Of hopes laid waste, knells in that word, *alone.*

Such were my impressions as I began the descent into the valley. I intuitively christened it the "Vale of Loneliness and Seclusion." Crossing this secluded vale in a north-westerly direction, I again came to the foot of the mountains, and began the winding ascent. The hitherto painful silence was now broken, for just where the road began its upward course a small creek leaped over the rocks, making a perpendicular descent of fifty feet or more, forming a most beautiful cataract, and dispelling by its gushing music the awful, all-pervading silence of the valley. I had climbed the mountain for only a short distance, however, when I came suddenly upon a cabin by the road-side. Conjecturing that it was the home of Tom Thaxton, I reined up my horse in front of the gate of the low rail fence that encircled the humble dwelling. The furious barking of a large mastiff brought the house-

wife to the door. I saluted her and was on the eve of inquiring as to whether or not I was right in my conjecture, when she relieved me of that task in rather an abrupt manner. I was, indeed, correct in my anticipations. This was the home of Tom Thaxton. The first utterance that fell from the lips of my prospective hostess proved it beyond a shadow of doubt.

CHAPTER II.

THE RATIFYING RECEPTION.

"O TOM! come to the house; the *new preacher* has come."

This sentence was uttered by my hostess as she stood in the door-way of her cabin home. The shrill notes greeted the ears of the plain, backwoods husband, who was engaged in distributing shucks, a hundred yards away, to the cattle that had gathered into the small barn-yard, impatiently clamoring for their evening meal.

The introduction which I thus received was queer enough, it is true, but then it was to the point. So much cannot be said of all introductions. There was no uncertain sound about it.

"The *new preacher* has come!" What an apt guesser! Could there be any thing clerical in my appearance? Surely not. But there was evidently something upon which she based

her conjecture. Perhaps it was because I wore "*store clothes*," as my reverend "Hardshell brother" had already informed me.

Such were my thoughts as I alighted from the tired steed that had borne me so faithfully along the precipitous roads of that mountainous section to this, the lowly home of one of my parishioners.

"The new preacher!" His coming was evidently an event in the monotonous history of that secluded home. But how the words rung in my ears! They startled and paralyzed, for the moment, every energy of my soul. How *new* indeed I was in the exercise of the functions of that sacred office had never before sunk so impressively into my heart. Never before had the sacred solemnities and weighty responsibilities of this divinely instituted office come upon me with such crushing force. To feed the flock of God and to seek the lost amid such mountain wilds, and in such homes as the one at whose gate I now stood, involved experience and demanded energy, zeal, and devotion. I felt keenly the lack of the former,

and entirely incapable of exercising the latter traits to that degree which would insure success. Indeed, the toils and transcendent solicitude of the Chief Shepherd, as portrayed in the parable of the lost sheep, loomed up before me in a light never before realized. For five years preceding this event I had been locked up in the cloisters of a literary college, going daily through the routine work of a student's life, preparing, as I thought, for the life of a common barrister. But God in his tenderness and wonderful condescension had laid his hand upon me, and I had unhesitatingly yielded myself up to him.

Just two months previous to the event about which I am writing I had received license as a local preacher; and just two weeks prior to the afternoon of which I have spoken I was received as "an applicant for admission on trial" into the South Carolina Conference, and now I stand before Tom Thaxton's gate the anxiously-looked-for "*new preacher*." Where will these transpositions end?

But this spell was broken by the presence

of Tom Thaxton. He was competent, as we shall see, to break any *spell;* for he was truly an original character, unlike all other "Toms," and as to that unlike all other men. He was clad in the inevitable blue jeans homespun, with an ample supply of corn-silks and bits of shucks adhering to his tall, angular form, bearing intelligence, at least to my faithful horse, that his most pressing wants would be speedily satisfied. For as gentle "Bill" looked upon these badges of what the barn contained they became to him an earnest of his night's lodging; hence he greeted the approach of my plain host with a friendly, obsequious neigh. He seemed over-willing to give himself into the hands of this stranger, his instinct teaching him that he would fare sumptuously. Indeed, so marked were his demonstrations that I almost became provoked at his obsequiousness. But nature is always true to itself. The marked deference which my horse paid to this stranger is in hearty accord with a spirit frequently observable in man. He doubtless thought that warm and comfortable quarters

were at stake. When a *soft bed* and *downy* pillows are the probable reward, man himself is no exception to such obsequiousness. As detestable as a favor-courting spirit may appear, that certain benefits may be received, or that certain apprehended dangers may be obviated, those persons who do not practice more or less such demeanors are the very rare exceptions.

But such verbosity! What a dialect! Had a few of my old college *chums* been there, how they would have heaved with laughter! Without the least ceremony my host began in this strain: "We know'd you'd be here. Betsy was a-sayin' this mornin' that she know'd, in reason, that you'd be here, beca'se to-morrow is your reg'lar day, in course, out at the Flat, and the preachers always stop here. But what might be your name? We han't hearn who's app'inted to our side. Lou's gone fur the paper now. Betsy was a-sayin' las' night that she would bet ten pumpkins when the app'intments come we'd get somebody we didn't know nothin' about. But Betsy will lose her bet

for once in her life, for you've outtraveled the app'intments, an' she'll have to eat her word, shoar, fur we'll l'arn somethin' 'bout you 'fore Lou comes with the *Advocate*."

Just here I seized an opportunity to make known my name, as my host paused to get breath.

"Sakes alive! I didn't know anybody was named that these days. But the elder 'lowed in his sarmon over at the 'las quarterly meeting that history was always repeatin' itself; but we didn't think he was a-goin' to repeat history on us so soon. Well, Brother Daniel, you han't quite got into the lion's den, but you han't fur from it, for we uns are mighty poor people on this circuit; but then we uns are powerful friendly. An' it thess this minnit popped into my head, Dave Lyon lives over on Oolenoi, an' Dave's a Baptist, an' he dearly loves to argufy, an' if you should drop in some time to see Dave, you'll be in the Lyon's den as shoar as you are the new preacher. See here! Come, go in to the fire an' make yourself at home, for I know you mus' be cold. I'll 'tend to your

creeter. Betsy! O Betsy! don't let Ring bite the little preacher."

What a welcome pause! for he had certainly given me enough to tax to their utmost capacity my digestive functions for a few moments at least.

"Poor, but friendly!" What itinerant preacher has not lived long enough to appreciate *friendliness*, even when *mixed with poverty?* What itinerant preacher has not sometimes groaned, "being burdened," because—situated as he was even among wealthy and independent parishioners — friendship, the kind that takes hold of the itinerant's heart, had apparently departed? What itinerant has not rejoiced at the presence of this silver-winged comforter, even in the homes of the lowliest? "Poor, but friendly," inestimable and precious kind of poverty! May it be multiplied!

As my host led my horse away toward the barn Betsy Thaxton came into the yard and grasped a chain, to one end of which was attached a huge block of wood and to the other

a raging brindled dog, the only being that disputed my right of way to the house, and the only *unfriendly* thing that greeted my approach to the dwelling of this simple-hearted "child of a King." And as I kept practically in view the scriptural injunction, "Beware of dogs," by giving a wide berth to the savage-looking beast, there also flashed through my mind the experiences of the last fifteen minutes. My host had made free with my name by alluding to its historic associations; and, not content with that, had most unmercifully referred to my littleness of stature as though these things were under my control. I had been unfortunate in this respect at college. If I happened to scratch my forehead with the spiral of a shirt stud, in adjusting that garment on a cold morning, the accident only served to bring me a pet name, "Scratch-forehead," varied, when the labors preparatory to examination claimed my most diligent attention, to "Scratch forward," and at last to the by no means euphonious cognomen of "Scratch," for short.

When I published in a newspaper the first production of my humble pen, little "preparatory imps" cried through college hall and over college *campus:* "O *Tempora!* the prophet has turned novelist, and the lions have lost a meal." So things moved for five years; but now I expected these frivolities to cease. But not so, alas! And I have long since learned that human nature is ever the same the world over. The polished gentleman, the mischievous school-boy, and the untoward backwoodsman each appreciates and has his own way of appropriating and manufacturing the ridiculous. These puns and efforts at wit, with the unlearned especially, are evidences, though not always so received, of a warm affection, on the part of the originator, for the one so victimized. I have long since learned to love the soul that knows how to launch forth puns and jests. They are food for the weary mind, and refreshing draughts to the overburdened heart.

Having stood the ordeal, therefore, of my host's witticisms, and having also, through the

assistance of my hostess, passed the only *unfriendly* object—the ferocious Ring—I entered for the first time the door of Tom Thaxton's mountain cabin.

The revelations of that mysterious home are reserved for the next chapter.

CHAPTER III.

REVEALING SOME PERPLEXING MYSTERIES.

"SO dear I loved the man," that I must say,

> "I took him for the plainest harmless creature
> That breathed upon the earth a Christian;
> Made him my book,"

and learned from him much that has profited and encouraged me. But, like all thoughtful books, he was difficult to read as I would have read him. Tom Thaxton was indeed original, suggestive, and amusing. But, best of all, he was orthodox to the core, practically and theoretically.

Such was my estimate of him when I learned him. He was well matched; for so soon as I sat down before the blazing log-heap that crackled cheerily in the broad fire-place I learned that Betsy Thaxton knew how to ask questions and make comments. As she went about preparing the evening meal at the fire by which I sat she learned from me the ap-

pointments of all the ministers with whom she had been associated in former years. She talked much of their virtues and idiosyncrasies, and then, by a well-framed cross-examination, she seemed determined to ascertain all that it was proper to know concerning the person of the *new preacher*, winding up, as she placed the last dish upon the table, with the very personal declaration: "My child, you've got a heap to learn."

Just as my hostess reached that important climax my host entered the house, having completed the chores, and we drew our chairs around the table preparatory to taking our evening meal. Of course I knew that all orthodox Methodists began their meals by invoking God's blessing, but I confess no little mental confusion when my host bid me "*make a beginning,*" and had not he and his devoted wife reverently bowed their heads I am afraid that I would not have grasped the meaning of that utterance. My appetite was keen enough, after the long day's ride, but I soon discovered that I would be compelled to satisfy it by

eating *between times*. Much of my time was consumed by answering questions from both sides of the house. However, when the meal was concluded and the time came to return thanks, I was readier to catch the meaning of my host when he asked me to "*make an ending.*"

Such decorum may seem strange to those who have been reared amid the refining influences of cultivated society; but when we take into consideration the environments and isolating circumstances of these mountaineers, it is altogether excusable. They are separated from the outside world, and are literally *hungry* for news. At best, mails reach them but once a week, and to many even this privilege is denied. It is said that eager crowds run along for quite a distance after coaches on the frontier, asking the driver many questions relative to occurrences in the States. Cæsar informs us that the barbaric tribes of ancient Gaul were accustomed to gather around the traders who entered their territory and ask many questions relative to the outside world. These traders, we are informed, often invented

marvelous stories, and related them just to witness the great surprise and large wonder on the part of the interested listeners.

What a wonderful economy is ours! It meets, and in a large measure satisfies, this natural propensity on the part of the most isolated member of the Church. Not only has every Methodist preacher the inestimable privilege of imparting information to the most ignorant backwoodsman, but our noble plan of pastoral and itinerant work enables each preacher to become thoroughly acquainted with the prominent characteristics of his field of labor, oftentimes before he is twenty-four hours on the work, thus becoming a *book* for the people, and at the same time studying them as his *book*.

Such, indeed, was the memorable experience of my first night at Tom Thaxton's. When he had exhausted his ample store of questions, he turned *informer*. All the peculiar Church characters in the community were painted in his homely way, and stood before me, soon to be met, as I afterward realized, as real living

beings. The important news that I was in a "Hard-shell" community must not, of course, be withheld from me.

"They won't fellowship any of us. They don't believe in book-larnin', either, an' it won't be many days 'fore some of 'em'll be a-cuttin' at you. You just ought to hear 'em preach. Their preachers are as thick as feathers on a duck's back 'round here. Parson Pondduck had it 'nounced an' norated that he was goin' to preach a sarmon on the 'postolic mode of baptism las' Sunday, an' I rid over to hear him. His text was: 'Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.' He didn't tell us whar it was, but said it mout be found betwixt the lids of the Bible. 'Pears mighty strange that they won't tell whar their text is. Betsy has been a-huntin' for it. She don't believe it's inside the lids of the Bible, beca'se the parson wouldn't tell whar it was; but I told her it sounded powerful like Scriptur' to me. But the text and sarmon wa'n't no kin."

"Can you give me his exegesis of the text?" I asked.

"Sakes alive! There wa'n't none in it. He didn't say a word 'bout them Greek words. But Brother Slater told us all 'bout them *eks* and *ins*, an' all 'em Greek words when he preached on baptism for us down at the Flat. He splained 'em all so that they were powerful clare to my mind. I tell you he was a *master* preacher. But Parson Pondduck didn't touch on that line; an' he didn't say a word 'bout circumcision, for he know'd all them things were ag'in' him, an' that he couldn't crawl over them. 'Pears powerful strange to me that they can't see nothin' in water but a grave, anyhow. He talked powerful 'fecting 'bout the watery grave, an' said nobody would ever go to heaven but them that went through that grave. He said that the watery grave was the narrow way that our Saviour spoke of, beca'se every man just made a hole to fit himself as he went down into the narrow stream. 'Peared to me it was a shallow an' sloppy way too. He 'lowed the Primitive Baptists were the few that entered therein. They would be saved beca'se 'Thus they fulfilled all righteous-

ness.' He said that sprinklin' an' pourin' an' all them highfalutin' an' do-as-you-please ways were the broad way that led down to destruction. I tell you the members took on awfully, an' I believe they thought it was the pure gospel. But that sarmon didn't sound much like the Scriptur' to me. As we come off from the church, I rid along with Deacon Jones, an' sez I to him: 'Parson Pondduck didn't nigh stick to his text to-day, 'cordin' to my notion.' He 'lowed 'twas clare as the sun to him that Parson Pondduck tracked the Scriptur' from beginnin' to eend. Sez I to him, sez I, 'It stands to reason, then, that everybody will be lost but you uns.' He 'lowed, sez ee, to me, sez ee, that some mout be saved in furren countries, where they didn't have the Scriptur' to read, beca'se, sez ee, they were without the gospel, an' the Lord might take pity on their ignorance an' save them; but, sez ee, in this enlightened land where the Scriptur' is expounded, that it was just as Parson Pondduck had said. Just then 'Cinda Smith overtuck us. An' 'Cinda is a Methodist from the crown of her head to the

soles of her feet. It would a done you good just to hearn her jine in the argufication. Sez she, 'It stan's to reason, then,' sez she, 'if Parson Pondduck is right 'bout the 'Hard-shell' Baptists bein' all that's goin' to be saved, that heaven would have to be rented out. An',' sez she, 'it's 'cordin' to Scriptur', too, beca'se,' sez she, 'I hearn Elder Simpkins prove outen the Bible down at the Cave when quarterly meetin' was held there that heaven was a mighty big place.' An' she 'lowed, sez she, everybody that know'd any thing know'd there wer'n't many 'Hard-shell' Baptists in the world; 'not enough,' sez she, 'to fill one corner of heaven.' She 'lowed there wer'n't enough of them to keep the music a-goin' an' to tend to the purty flowers in the green fields of Eden. 'An',' sez she, 'it stands to reason in my mind that unless it's rented out you uns will have a powerful hard time a-doin' all them things the Scriptur' speaks of bein' carried on there.' You just ought to seed Deacon Jones bile over. He han't said a word to me 'bout baptism since. Never mind, they'll be out as thick as hail at

the Flat to-morrow to hear you preach; that is, if it is a day fitten, and"—

I know not what my host would have said, for just then his sentence was broken by the entrance of a young lady, whom Tom Thaxton introduced as his daughter.

The amusing experiences and theological controversies related by my host had already driven sleep away from my tired body. I had been amused, bewildered, and mortified, and, I must say, instructed. Indeed, that such people as these, to whom the bishop had sent me, existed within the bounds of my native State was really stranger to me than fiction. That such theology (?) was taught in the nineteenth century, and that, too, within the bounds of an enlightened and civilized country, was a truth that the schools had failed to teach me.

But *bewildered* as I had been, bewilderment is scarcely an adequate term by which to express the state of my mind as I stood confronting the maid who had just entered—Louise Thaxton. She was tall, graceful, queenly, just blooming into young womanhood. Her feat-

ures were delicate, and her facial expression was of the most intellectual cast. In a word, her rare physical beauty, her cultured deportment, and the evidence she gave of cultivation and refinement were in strange contrast with her surroundings.

I looked up at the crude old family clock, and it was just nine. I had previously learned from my host that Louise Thaxton had been on her weekly errand to the nearest little town, nearly twenty miles away, for the purpose of getting the mail and procuring also whatever little articles the family was compelled to make use of, and which could not be manufactured at home. That long journey had been performed in the primitive style, on horseback. Since darkness had thrown its sable shadows over her pathway the road she traveled had led her through the dark valleys and over the towering crags of the lofty spurs of the Blue Ridge. The oppressive silence of that ride had been interrupted only by the melancholy sound of the rushing cataracts, the occasional scream of the owls and night-birds that in-

fested the coves of that wild and lonesome region, and perhaps the doleful howl of the catamount as it sought its prey among the rugged cliffs. An untimely hour, to be sure, for the return of an unaccompanied and unprotected girl. I afterward learned, however, that such was the custom of the people of this isolated region, because the natural environments and surroundings of these hardy mountaineers have begotten in them an intrepidity worthy of the bravest. This bold, fearless spirit is common to both sexes. But these were lessons learned long after that eventful night of which I am writing. And that an unprotected girl should have performed such a journey, and on her return unsaddled, stabled, and fed her steed, was to me simply marvelous. But what most perplexed me was the problem of the existence of one of such rare beauty, refined deportment, and cultured speech in such a home, one so crude and primitive as Tom Thaxton's. How could it be that one reared by those who spoke the cracker dialect, and who was completely separated from refined

and polished society, should speak our language with the precision and elegance of a Macaulay, and at the same time exhibit the deportment of the most refined?

As Louise Thaxton stood before me the very impersonation of an ideal beauty, clad in homespun cottonades, while rough, home-made leather shoes incased her small, handsomely shaped feet—a veritable mountain girl in dress and general attire—but in speech, carriage, and deportment a pure lily of the valley, I forgot the amusing experiences of the last few hours, and sat fixed to the chair, unable to wrench my gaze from her enrapturing person. Tom Thaxton's tongue, however, ran unceasingly on, but his words made little or no impression on me. Even our evening devotions failed to banish from my mind for a moment the mysterious problem that had so unexpectedly confronted me. Even when assigned to my little and scantily furnished chamber sleep was driven from me, while I lay pressed down into the great feather-bed by the bountiful supply of home-woven coun-

terpanes and woolen blankets that Betsy Thaxton had been so careful to place over the bed, that the cold winds of January, which howled through the cracks of my apartment, might not reach my tired body. My person was therefore doubly protected from the cruel cold, but the mystery that enveloped one member of that isolated family drove sleep, sweet sleep, from my eyes, and tortured cruelly the inner man.

> O sleep! O gentle sleep!
> Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee,
> That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
> And steep my senses in forgetfulness?

CHAPTER IV.

WHEREIN ARE RECORDED SOME AMUSING EXPERIENCES, AND CLOSING WITH A TRAGEDY.

THE chamber which I occupied was located at one end of a little piazza. Those who have traveled in the mountains will recognize this very necessary appendage of a first-class mountain cabin.

Early on the following morning I was aroused, having fallen asleep just before day, from this quiet retreat by a loud rap on the door of the little chamber, accompanied by the familiar voice of Tom Thaxton: "Git up; *we uns* are ready for to eat."

I hastily adjusted my toilet. The sun's rays were darting through the cracks of my room, bringing to me the intelligence that the winds had blown away the lowering clouds, and furthermore impressing me with the fact that it would be "a day *fitten*," according to Tom Thaxton's cracker phraseology, for my strange

auditors to turn out *en masse.* These precious rays, notwithstanding the "Hard-shell" audience they might bring, came to me like the influence and associations of a precious gift from a kind friend. God's gifts are common to all men. No matter how far we may be separated from those we love, or what circumstances may surround us, God's precious gifts are always present with us; we cannot be separated from them. God had caused the winds to sweep away the clouds. O that a like dispensation of an omniscient Father would lift the clouds of mystery that have involuntarily overshadowed my mind!

Such were my meditations as I kneeled by the side of my bed and poured out my soul in thanksgiving and adoration for the blessings and loving-kindness of a gracious Father.

When I had finished my devotions, and began to search for a basin in which to bathe my burning eyes, alas! there was none. Such neglect was unpardonable. I was almost vexed. But "while in Rome we must do as Rome does." I was, however, soon relieved from

this embarrassing situation by the re-appearance of my host, who rapped upon the door and said: "When you get ready to wash your face an' han's, just come out to the spout." I stepped out into the little piazza, and thence followed my host into the narrow yard back of his dwelling. The scene that was there opened up to me was truly enrapturing. The mountain, on the side of which the house was located, rose sublimely perpendicular, almost, from the very underpinning of the dwelling. Indeed, the sides of the mountain had been dug away so as to make level the site of the little log cabin. The rays of the early morning's sun flashed upon the hugh masses of dripping rock; thence they were reflected, causing these immense piles of granite to resemble enormous bowlders of pure glass. Away up the mountain-side a little stream leaped over the perpendicular rocks, forming a most beautiful cascade. The streamlet lined the rugged mountain-side like a thread of silver, continually rushing down, *down* toward the dark valley beneath us. Now it is lost behind the stu-

pendous piles of earth and rock; again it darts forth like a ray of light, leaping out of the earth itself. Nearer and yet nearer it approaches, forming all along its pathway numbers of little cascades transcendently beautiful, but less imposing than the larger one higher up the mountain. On and on it came until its pellucid waters, fresh from the heart of the mountain, poured through a wooden spout and fell in a crystal stream at our feet. In that beautiful stream of pure water, fresh from the reservoirs of the "everlasting hills," I bathed on that beautiful Sunday morning in January, 1880. Little did I then dream that at some future day, as I should wander along the banks of that little rill, tracing it up the steep mountain-side, there would suddenly burst upon me the full revelation of the "mystery of the mountain cabin," yet such was the case.

Enraptured by the handiwork of Him who "marshals the hosts of heaven and thunders forth in the artillery of the clouds," who once, Himself, tabernacled on Sinai's summit, and

fringed the cloud-curtains of His pavilion with the forked lightning, I made my first effort at pastoral conversation. I was the child and humble ambassador of the great First Cause of this, His magnificent handiwork. Must I not speak of His "tender mercies and loving-kindnesses?" The effort was difficult, yet in some measure, at least, it was accomplished.

"How thankful," I said, "Brother Thaxton, we should be for the inestimable blessings our Father bestows! upon us and yet we often pass them by unnoticed. We have, this morning, an unclouded sky, and a bright, beautiful Sabbath. It seems that God has made special provisions for his children to-day, not only giving them a beautiful day in which to attend upon his worship, but so far as we are concerned, at least, he has crowned us with health of body and peace of mind. I hope you enjoy religion and cultivate a spirit of thanksgiving, Brother Thaxton."

Such was my first effort at speaking, privately, a word for my Master's cause; and I shall never forget what a trial my risibilities

sustained when I turned away from the spout and confronted my host.

There he stood, the very impersonation of surprise. The long, coarse towel, with which I was to dry my face, was thrown across his shoulder, his hands were thrust deep into the pockets of his trousers, his eyes were dilated, and his lips were slightly parted with large wonder; and as I reached forth and drew the towel from his shoulder he began his reply: "Sakes alive! I thought you were a-preachin'; why, you didn't think I an't got religion, did you? Yes, sir, I come through just twenty-two years ago, if I'm spared to see the 16th day of July comin'. I come through just about sundown at Bald Knob Camp-meetin'. I tell you what! preachers could preach in them days. They knowed the Scriptur' same as I know my name. I wa'n't a member of the Church then, an' as I had laid by my crap, an' had nothin' to do, think's I, I'll go down to the meetin' mostly for to see an' be seed. But, I tell you, I soon seed I was lost accordin' to what the Scriptur' said, an' somehow or some-

how else I felt powerful pestered. I don't think I ever sperienced such botherment in my life, beca'se I knowed I hadn't been a-livin' right. So I just hauled down my colors, an' give right up, beca'se I seed 'twa'n't no use to fight ag'in' the Almighty. An' I han't made no spirits since, nor drunk none nuther; an' it's kept me out'n a sight o' trouble, too, as shoar's Betsy's my partner for life. 'Tan't no news to me that I had ought to be thankful, as you say, for don't the Scriptur' say: 'The way of the transgressor is hard?'"

I do not know what practical application this rough, though pure-hearted mountaineer, would have made of this scriptural quotation; for just as he uttered it we heard the clatter of horses' feet rapidly descending the mountain. Anon there swept by the humble dwelling a company of United States revenue officials, bearing along with them two men, who were evidently citizens.

My host shaded his eyes with his hand to protect them from the dazzling rays of the sun, as he looked after the flying horsemen,

and continued: "Yes, 'tan't no use in trying to get 'round Scriptur'. 'The way of the transgressor is hard.' There goes Billy Jones and Mike Green, an' I tole the boys no longer'n night afore las' that 'em fellers would make a raid on 'em. Poor boys, I feel sorry for 'em, but 'tan't no use a-bein' sorry for folks that won't have no pity on theirselves, an' won't take no advice."

There was a vein of practical philosophy in this ignorant man's observations. But most of all I could not doubt the genuineness of his conversion, and the thoroughness of his Christianity. He was evidently a big-hearted, whole-souled Christian man, but his generosity must be shown in his own crude way. And such characters are indeed the world's greatest benefactors. He was one of that class of individuals we occasionally meet who never tire of talking, and who have the rare facility of passing from one subject to another without any break whatever in the conversation. We always listen to such men, whether they are men of attainments or otherwise. Providence seems to

favor them by always evolving for them just the incidents and occurrences suited to their linguistic talents. While others are thinking what to say, their tongues run unceasingly on, and they have the rare facility of appropriating whatever comes along. I cannot even guess where this good man's experiences and observations would have ended. He had gotten from his conversion at Bald Knob Campground to illicit whisky-making, and was rapidly moving on toward the United States prison, when my hostess summarily broke the line of conversation by announcing breakfast.

I sat opposite Louise at the breakfast-table, hence I had a better opportunity of studying her physiognomy. There was not the slightest resemblance in her facial features to either Tom or Betsy Thaxton. Neither was there an utterance of her tongue which bordered on the provincialisms and the cracker dialect of the other two inmates of that home. This vivid contrast caused me to break through all conventionalities in the fruitless endeavor to ascertain the cause of this marked difference

between the parents and the child. I therefore unceremoniously asked: "Where were you educated, Miss Louise?"

She blushingly met my gaze, and replied with becoming diffidence: "I have never been so fortunate, sir. We are destitute of schools here. My mother, however, taught me to read, and instructed me in the rudiments of our language."

Alas! my first question elicited an answer that thrilled my being with another problem, while it brought forth no light relative to the one I desired to solve. Could it be that Tom Thaxton had been twice married? One thing, however, was evident: Betsy Thaxton was not the mother of Louise. But what course must I adopt? Shall I violate the law of propriety, to say the least, and interrogate the inmates of this mysterious home about matters that in nowise concern me? Surely I could not so far forget every sense of propriety. Hence I determined to change my tactics. My very instinct, as it were, taught me that honest Tom Thaxton had no secrets. I determined, there-

fore, not to educe the knowledge which I so much desired from him by questioning him directly about his own private family matters. I resolved to cultivate the grace of patience, and to adroitly turn, from time to time, Tom Thaxton's conversation into certain channels, knowing that these plain mountaineers talk almost exclusively of what they have at some time observed or experienced. In a word, I concluded to let him do that work which he was so willing to perform, and for which nature had so admirably fitted him—talk about every thing he had seen, heard, or felt—hoping that by so doing he would let fall some clew to the mystery in his own household. I therefore addressed him relative to the party of United States officials that had just passed his dwelling. "Did you know that fine-looking officer who rode in front of the party?" I asked.

"O yes," he replied; "that was Eugene Dudevant."

When my host uttered the name of the officer the color rose into Louise's face. Why

should her cheeks assume a crimson hue at the mention of the name of a United States revenue official? Had he wronged her in any way, or was he any thing to her? Surely I thought that all the mysteries that would ever confront me were destined to be crowded into my short stay at Tom Thaxton's. My host kept on, however, ignorant of the reverie into which Louise's crimson face had plunged me.

"He's a wild one, too—no more afeard of bullets than I am of Betsy. But they always leave these parts like a greased streak of lightnin', when they have made a raid, beca'se it wouldn't be safe for 'em to stay. Listen at them horns! There'll be blood shed, I'm afeard."

The range of mountains round about us seemed to be alive with hunters, who blew one prolonged blast. I shall never forget the impression that the sound of those horns made upon me as it echoed and reverberated through the coves and over the lofty peaks of those towering crags. "What does it mean?" I convulsively asked.

"It's the people a-givin' warnin' that there's been a raid," answered my host.

Ah! I understood. Sound travels faster than horsemen. It was a call to the rescue. A few minutes later we heard in the distance rapid firing. It was down the valley, in the direction the little company of officers had gone.

"I told you somebody was goin' to be hurt," ejaculated my host. "Some one will be killed thess as shoar as Betsy's my boss."

When the gunshots ceased there also died away the last lingering echoes of the blast of a dozen hunters' horns. There was again a perfect calm, broken only by Tom Thaxton's tongue.

"Well, some folks 'lows there han't no hereafter, but it stan's to reason in my mind that there'll have to be a hereafter to straighten out all the crooked things that turn up down here. Just beca'se folks won't do right all this breakin' o' the Sabbath and sufferin' is brought on; yes, sir, the Scriptur' is mighty true when it says: 'The way of the transgressor is hard.'

An' it stan's to reason, accordin' to that Script-ur', that if we do right, our way an't goin' to be hard. Folks bring most of their trouble on theirselves."

Such, in part, were Tom Thaxton's comments on the occurrence that had evidently thrilled the entire community with great excitement. But that occurrence, sad as it proved to be, nor any thing else seemed destined to break away the clouds of mystery that had enveloped that humble cabin. "Well, let the dead bury their dead," said he, ''tan't no business of *ourn* to be lookin' after violators o' the Sabbath, an' the laws o' the land, too. We must be a-ridin' toward the 'Flat.'"

Our little company of four were soon in the saddle, and the mysterious little cabin was robbed for awhile of its inmates, but so far it had yielded up none of the mysteries that enshrouded it like a thick cloud.

CHAPTER V.

FLAT ROCK CHURCH AND THE CONGREGATION.

AS we rode away from the little cabin perched upon the mountain-side I cherished the hope that either on our way to the Flat, as the people called it, or at the church itself, something would occur or be said which would reveal, in some measure at least, the cause of the mysterious existence of Louise Thaxton. But alas! I was disappointed. The problem was not solved, but became more problematic.

The little log meeting-house had taken its name from a large, flat rock, which covered an area of at least one acre. The surface of the rock was about one foot above the level of the ground, and was remarkably even. The northeast corner of the crude building rested upon this rock, and while the other three corners were supported by blocks of undressed stone, it was evident that these crude pillars rested

upon the same large flat rock, the earth that hid it from view being only a few inches in depth. So this little mountain chapel was in reality a "house founded upon a rock," and such was the first impression that came to one the moment he beheld it. The building was constructed of round logs. Its dimensions were about eighteen by twenty feet. The crevices between the logs amply ventilated the building. The seats were made of split chestnut slabs, into which holes had been bored and legs inserted. These rough stools were backless. The building was not ceiled, and as for stoves, they were an unknown article in that reigon. A blazing fire, however, of pine logs had been kindled in the yard. Such is a true picture of Flat Rock Church.

The congregation was large. Evidently the "new preacher" had not drawn together this immense crowd. There was another cause. Their community had been invaded by revenue officers, two of their citizens had been arrested, shooting had been heard, somebody may have been killed, and the church was the

best place to get all the news from every quarter; therefore the entire community came together at the church. The congregation was in a high state of excitement.

Knots of men had come together in the sunny places all over the church-yard. Their blue jeans home-spun suits, cut, I almost affirmed, in *ancient* and modern styles, at least approximating every style and rivaling no one of them, and set with all kinds of buttons, from the bright bronze military button that had been worn by some soldier through the last great civil struggle between the States down to the large, old-fashioned and now quite obsolete agate button that had evidently belonged to Revolutionary sires, and which had been carefully preserved, not as relics, but purely from a spirit of economy, and handed down from father to son through all those intervening years.

Rollicking maidens, arm in arm, continually paced the pathway that led from the church to the spring. Dresses of all shades and various styles adorned their persons, as to shade, par-

ticularly red, green, and yellow. Each maid was, apparently, either listening to or pouring some important secret into the ears of her companion.

The matronly women had gathered into a group near the fire of pine-logs, and, with pipes in full blast, and true to their sex, they all talked at the same time—a feat, by the way, which the sterner sex has never been able to accomplish, owing to his inability to do two things at the same time. Every one of them seemed to be intensely interested in one leading theme. Doubtless it was the capture by the revenue force of the illicit distillery, and the correlations of that fact.

The young men had gathered together in the sunshine upon the surface of the large, flat rock. They were listening with great interest to one of their number, who seemed all the while to have the undisputed right of the floor, or rather of the rock. A bit of flaming red ribbon was tied in the button-hole of his blue jeans coat, a sprig of cedar, plume-like, was tucked under his hat-band, while he gestic-

ulated with a fantastically carved walking-cane. He was evidently a leading character among the young hopefuls of Flat Rock community.

A dozen very old men had separated themselves from the groups which I have mentioned, and were sitting with bowed heads upon the rail pens that were built over the graves of the departed. They seemed to be wholly unconcerned about the great subject that appeared to be claiming the attention of everybody else. They were perhaps thinking and speaking to each other in undertones of the vanities of the present age, of the excellences of by-gone days, and, perhaps, as aged people are wont to do, of the last resting-place that awaited their frail and aged bodies somewhere near the spot where they then sat.

Such is a bird's-eye view of the state of the congregation at the Flat when we reached that point. Surely something more than we knew of had happened, for the excitement seemed to be intense. We had alighted and made fast our steeds when we were approached by a man

who came from one of the little knots of individuals that had gathered in the church-yard, and who informed us that Eugene Dudevant had been killed that morning while he was conveying his two prisoners to the county jail. I looked into the face of Louise. She stood transfixed to the spot, and was as pale as death; but by a powerful effort of the will she restrained her feelings and moved away toward the church, while Tom Thaxton ejaculated what seemed to be his favorite expression: "Well, the Scriptur' says: 'The way of the transgressor is hard.'"

It was eleven o'clock, the hour for preaching. The congregation was nervous and excited. The preacher was in the unmerciful meshes of bewilderment, and I doubt very much, as well as these mountaineers like to discuss the merits of a sermon, if the sermon of that day ever went through the mill of crude disputation. It was a relief to me when I again threw myself into the saddle and rode a dozen miles away, and farther into the immense piles of earth and rock that constitute

the far-famed Blue Ridge Mountains, to meet my afternoon appointment at Chestnut Plains. I preached to the little assembly that afternoon as best I could, and then rode away to the county seat, where I slept soundly, and dreamed over the "Mystery of the Mountain Cabin" and its mysterious inmate, the "Girl in Checks."

CHAPTER VI.

EUGENE DUDEVANT.

I SAW Eugene Dudevant but once. There was something attractive about his person. He was riding with all the grace and exquisite horsemanship of a gallant cavalier. But alas! it was a ride into the very jaws of death. His office was an unpopular one. These mountaineers looked upon distilling as an inalienable right, or at least many of them did. It was the quickest and easiest way by which they could turn the scanty produce of their soil into money. They could not understand why the Government sought to monopolize, in a degree, the whisky trade and its manufacture. If it was just and legal, in the ethical sense of these terms, for the Government to grant a *right*, backed and supported by its power, in consideration of a stipulated sum of money paid to it, to certain individuals to produce and sell whisky, did not that very act

upon the part of the Government go to establish that there was a positive necessity for the production of spirits. If such were the case, did the Government have the right to discriminate against any section of the country, so far as the production of whisky was involved?

These mountaineers therefore claimed that the license system discriminated, virtually, against them, because, they maintained, they were poor and isolated and could not, therefore, meet the requirements of the Government. Furthermore, they argued that if whisky was a necessity to men, it was as much so to them as to others; and therefore they claimed, since it was impossible for them to meet the demands of the Government in this matter, or to procure the article otherwise than by manufacture, it was their inalienable right to make whisky in spite of the Government. Secondly, they claimed that, if whisky was not a necessity, and if its production was a wrong and a misdemeanor which ought to be punished and suppressed by the laws of the

land, then the payment of license could not possibly make it a less misdemeanor or obliterate its criminality; "therefore," they said, "we have as much right, intrinsically speaking, to do wrong as has the Government."

And, indeed, is not the Government as deep in the scale of criminality as any illicit distillery hid away in the dark coves of the Blue Ridge Mountains? Is not the sale of license on the part of the Government a virtual admission of the crime of making and selling intoxicants? And is not the principle involved precisely the same as that abominable usage and doctrine of Roman Catholicism whereby that priest-ridden Church sells her *indulgences?*

The writer has often sat by the firesides of these plain mountaineers, and listened to these arguments. Who will say that they are not logical, and based upon the strictest principles of justice? How can the Government itself answer these arguments, save by the fiat of its laws? Indeed, there is but one answer to their

crude but logical appeals, and that is universal prohibition; for no Government has a right to do, either directly or indirectly, that which it prevents its subjects from doing. For what indeed would the principle upon which the license system is based lead to, were it applied to morals and ethics generally?

I have introduced these thoughts here to show why the office which Eugene Dudevant held was unpopular. Its insufferable nature did not spring so much from incorrigible disloyalty to the Government on the part of the violators as from the injustice which they saw in the laws which restrained and prohibited them from doing that which the Government itself did indirectly by its license system.

Eugene Dudevant, holding his commission from the Government, rushed into the midst of these towering mountains, sought the concealed distilleries among the craggy peaks, apprehended the transgressors, and they killed him.

Physically speaking, he was a noble speci-

men of Southern manhood — tall, handsome, genteel-looking—a veritable Carolinian in every aspect of his bearing.

It was doubly sad that so noble-looking a man should have been slaughtered in so ignominious a manner. He was shot down without a moment's warning. The shrill, prolonged blast of a dozen horns, and then came the bullet from the gun of the assassin, as he lay concealed in the bush by the road-side. How in its unsuspected phase like the last trump that shall sound the death-knell of time! Without a moment even for a last prayer he was called away from earth. The charge was well aimed, it went straight to the heart, and the gallant rider reeled from his saddle a corpse.

Though he had for several years lived a lewd fellow "of the baser sort," he was not a plebeian. The best blood of the State coursed through his veins, for he was the son of a wealthy, aristocratic rice-planter. He had been reared amid the most exquisite luxury that wealth could afford. He was educated at

the best schools of Europe, and, notwithstanding the degraded life he was leading, his refinement and *elite* bearing were not completely annihilated. But alas! as is too often the case, one all-important element had been ignored in his rearing—a strict attention to his moral development.

One of the saddest blots upon the pages of the history of the death-struggles of the "Old South," were it written, would be the downfall and utter ruin of many of Carolina's noble sons, whose families, prior to the throes of reconstruction, stood pre-eminent in the State, both in political and social circles. One of the foulest blots upon the pages of her otherwise bright escutcheon is not that of the institution of slavery (for that the South has made ample defense), but the great fact that among certain classes position and wealth took the place, to a great degree, of morality and religion — that is, the tendency of *ante bellum* institutions in the South was toward the formation of castes as inflexible and iron-bound as those of heathen India. Men were

beginning to be honored because they were of certain distinguished families, and not because of their inherent worth. When the reaction came many fell. They could not adjust themselves to the new order of things, and therefore only the fittest of them survived the wonderful revolution.

To that class which failed to stand the shock of the awful disruption Eugene Dudevant belonged. In all his training he failed to attain that degree of moral culture and worth necessary to support him in the trials incident to this life, to guide and protect him amid the throes, shocks, and struggles through which his native State was called to pass.

The final result was but the legitimate effect of a cause deeply imbedded in the very atmosphere of his boyhood days. Hence the proud patrician dies away from friends and home, a martyr to no cause, but a devotee at the shrine of prodigality and sensualism. The bullet that sent him to his long home came from a gun in the hands of one of his own countrymen and a plebeian.

Such thoughts crowd themselves into my mind as I record the revelations of the mountain cabin, and the reader, ere he completes these pages, will adjudge them right.

I watched the casket that contained Dudevant's manly form, as the pall-bearers, a lewd, debased crowd to be sure, placed it upon the train, and sent it to the old homestead in the lower part of the State, to be interred in the old Dudevant family grave-yard.

The most appropriate epitaph, were sincerity and truth always practiced in such things, would be this superscription upon the tomb:

"The Stroke of a Father's Hand."

CHAPTER VII.

BURIAL OF EUGENE DUDEVANT, AND A LOOK INTO THE OLD HOMESTEAD.

THE writer stood at the window of his room on the day following that on which Eugene Dudevant was killed, and beheld the corpse pass through the street of the little village to the depot, whence it was sent to the old family burying-ground for interment. No train of sorrowing relatives and friends followed the corpse. It was a sad scene on that account. But follow that body to its destination, to that place of sepulture which already bristles with artistically carved shafts and columns that mark the resting-places of six generations of the Dudevants; walk among the silent tombs, read the epitaphs, and learn how honorable in State and in society many of these were who now sleep in the dust; mark the lavish expenditure of means on this one silent spot; walk among the stately mag-

nolias and the beautiful evergreens; mark the steel railings inclosing the sacred spot, and covered with the thorn-armored hedge-rose—and these things will speak in words that you cannot misinterpret, telling you eloquently that the Dudevants once revered the memory of their dead and spared no expense to embellish and beautify their last resting-place. But see that little party of revenue officials as they lower their comrade into the grave. There is not a tear-stained cheek there. Their faces are flushed, but not from grief. They hastily let the corpse down into the grave, and as hastily fill it up, and then they drive two stakes into the ground, one to mark the foot and the other the head of the grave. There is no minister present to utter the solemn committal, "dust to dust, ashes to ashes, earth to earth." There is no "word of comfort," no hymn floating out in soft, measured tones upon the still evening air. Shall I characterize it as worse than a heathen burial? Even they reverence their gods at such times. The work is finished, and these lewd fellows, as they

stand about the grave, pass around the decanter of captured contraband whisky, and drink to the memory of their departed colleague. Alas for depraved humanity! The devil officiates at a burying. The scene is sickening; turn away from it, and walk out of this richly decorated inclosure, this sacred spot in which the arch-fiend now holds high carnival among the base associates of the murdered man, and look over the broad acres of the Dudevant homestead, with its extensive rice-fields and unrivaled cotton-lands, dotted over with little villages of well-painted, cozy little cottages, the homes of the slaves who once tilled the broad fields before you. But behold how the destroyer has already defaced these fertile fields. Neglect and decay is written on every object.

Turn from this fascinating scene, even so while under the merciless hand of decay, and wend your way up the long avenue of live-oaks to the old Dudevant homestead dwelling. Look upon its superb stateliness, walk up the flight of marble steps and pull the door-bell;

ask Marm Phyllis, bowing already under the weight of threescore and ten years, to show you through the interior of the magnificent dwelling. Once within you are enchanted and enraptured. Every thing is truly superb. Magnificent and richly carved furniture, a rare library collected at great expense and selected with the greatest care. Rare works of art hang from the frescoed walls, and every thing goes, unmistakably, to show that wealth and refinement were once the supreme rulers of this home.

As you look upon this beautiful home, you intuitively ask yourself this question: "How did Eugene Dudevant come to leave all this magnificence and grandeur, for it was his home, and die a violent and untimely death in a mountain cove of Western South Carolina, a debased revenue officer?"

The solution of the problem is easy. Louis Dudevant had but two children, Eugene and Estelle. There was but two years' difference in their ages, and Estelle was the elder of the twain. She exerted a great and good influ-

ence over Eugene as they were growing up. Every care and sorrow were curtained off from them, and they were as happy as mortals can well be in this world. Eugene was attentive and devoted to his sister.

If "The Oaks" (for that was the name by which the homestead was known far and near) was a pleasant place, it was made so by these happy children. They were bred to aristocracy. They were taught to be proud of their blood. From earliest infancy they had been led to believe that the social position of the Dudevant family for ages past, as well as their property, differentiated them from the masses of humanity. Therefore these children had gathered around them as their associates the wealthiest, the most intelligent, as well as the most refined and *elite* people that the old Palmetto State could afford. "The Oaks" was universally known as a jolly place. Many a satin-robed belle's slippered feet have, with measured step, many a time kept pace with the sweet cadences of the mellow-toned violin in these spacious but now silent halls. Costliest

wines and brandies were once sipped at these boards by *elitest* belles and beaus, and many a time produced that artificial good cheer which once made these frescoed walls echo with the merry laughter of jolly visitors.

But "The Oaks," after all, was not an attractive place simply because nature had lavished upon it scenery so fascinating and resplendent. Neither was it a happy home because art and wealth had contributed so much to its beauty and magnificence. All of these things combined did not make the place home.

The majestic, silently sweeping Pee Dee that almost encircled the grand old building, the far-famed and sweet-scented magnolias, the stately live-oaks draped in the long, weird-looking moss swaying back and forth in the slightest breeze, and the magnificent dwelling surrounded by the little villages of tenement houses, orchards of semi-tropical fruits and gardens of ever-blooming flowers, made "The Oaks" an enchanting spot, just as there are many such places in this semi-tropical clime.

It was not all of these things combined that

drew to "The Oaks" the crowds of merry visitors. Nor did these things make home a pleasant place for Eugene and Estelle; for all of these things yet remain, and the old mansion is as silent as the tomb. No merry crowds of visitors have crossed its threshold in twenty long years.

Homes and places, to make them attractive, must have souls, and the souls of places are as easily corrupted as are those of men. Homes die like men. There are diseases and calamities just as fatal to them as they are to us, who are "so wonderfully and fearfully made." One of these maladies, so fatal in their results, had fastened its deathly, poisonous fang into the grand old mansion at "The Oaks," and the once merry home had yielded up the ghost.

Louis Dudevant's kind and sweet-spirited wife died long years ago, but the gentle, amiable Estelle inherited her virtues and therefore filled that otherwise irreparable gap, and it was home, sweet home still to Eugene.

Years rolled on, and smoothly flowed the

current of home life. But there came at last a terrific shock that caused that home to vibrate from center to circumference. The chilly hand of death was laid upon the life of that home.

Louis Dudevant, it is necessary to state, was stern, unyielding, and uncompromisingly proud. In a fit of anger he had virtually driven his only daughter from her paternal roof. It was indeed a sad stroke; for how can home exist without wife, sister, or daughter? Without the cheering presence of these ministering angels home must die.

After this sad event, which we shall explain in its proper place, stern old Louis Dudevant and Eugene remained at the old homestead, but alas! all of its attractions were gone. The hand of death was daily tightening its grip on "The Oaks," and the once jolly place is doomed erelong to lie cold in death.

O the dead homes that live only in the memory of their once happy inmates! Such homes come up vividly in the minds of many a man and many a woman who have passed

the meridian of life. Where now are the happy homes of our childhood's innocent years? They live with many of us only on memory's page.

But the death of the home at "The Oaks" was sadder than usual, because it was a murdered home. Louis Dudevant killed it. That dark day when Estelle stepped out from under the shadow of the stately mansion, under the frown of her own father, was its death-stroke.

Ten years from that event Louis Dudevant had been laid away in yonder beautiful cemetery to await the final judgment. He had witnessed the great struggle between the States; he had, in common with other Southerners, experienced largely its bitter results, and just as the black clouds of civil war were being swept from the horizon, he had fixed all of his property on Eugene, and a few years afterward went the way of all the world.

It is almost needless to say that "The Oaks" was no longer home for Eugene. Ten long years he had been haunted by the former associations of his sweet-spirited sister, but the

blood-poison (can I call the proud, aristocratic spirit which had been bred in him by a better name?) which had taken fast hold upon him, together with the bitter feelings he had imbibed from intimate association with his father during those ten years that they had lived alone at "The Oaks," had caused him to heap undying curses upon the head of that lovely, unprotected sister who had once made home so attractive. The reaction of his bitter spirit rebounded upon his devoted head at his father's death. He became restless, he longed for some power to break off from his bitter soul the tormenting pangs that had fastened themselves thereto. He was indeed homeless with all the possessions that had been heaped upon him. Here, then, is the solution of the problem. This explains why Eugene Dudevant fell on that beautiful Sabbath morning in a mountain cove, pierced to the heart by a bullet from an assassin's gun.

Ah! there are indeed murderers who have accomplished their fearful work long after their bodies have been committed to the tomb.

Such a murderer was Louis Dudevant, a posthumous murderer, and that too of his own chidren.

Plain Tom Thaxton was indeed right when he said, in substance at least, that there must be a court hereafter to try the crimes and avenge outraged justice in such cases as these which the courts of this world can never reach.

These facts I have anticipated in this fragment of sectional history, for the sake of making plain my story. The dead, as we shall see by and by, sometimes speak, and in so doing unlock many mysteries.

CHAPTER VIII.

A VISIT INTO THE REGION BEYOND.

IT is a fact known to those who have traveled in the Blue Ridge Mountains that the people always tell you of certain customs prevailing farther up in the mountain wilds. They frequently speak of these customs as "the way people do up in the mountains," thus making the inexperienced traveler feel that he is ever approaching, yet never able to reach, that point in "the land of the sky" where he may safely say that he has been into the mountains proper.

My afternoon appointment on the first Sunday in February was at Chestnut Plains, ten miles from the Flat. The direction from the above-named point was north-westerly, thus carrying me still farther into the mountains. The log meeting-house was constructed very much on the same plan as the building at Flat Rock. It was located on a level plateau of

table-land, covered with a grove of chestnut-oaks, and closely shut in by frowning mountains on every side. North-west of the church the scene was truly inspiring. Beginning about fifty yards from the door of the little building, where a great peak arose abruptly and semi-perpendicularly from this level spot, there mounted up peak upon peak, mountain upon mountain, until finally the tops of the distant spurs seemed to fade away from mortal vision, having hid their heads in the deep blue sky.

I reached the church on that long to be remembered Sabbath in February, 1880, awhile before time for service, and I stood in the church-yard and watched the assembling of the congregation. Many came from the north-west, yet from the level plateau upon which the church was built that portion of the country seemed to me to be wholly inaccessible. Looking from the church-yard upon those almost cloud-crowned, broken masses of earth and rock, one would be slow to believe that even the agile deer could make its way over those

stupendous granite-girt mountains. But every one who has traveled in "the land of the sky" knows that mountains are like the troubles and difficulties that loom up before us in the rugged pathway of life—they frequently vanish when we reach them.

This towering, broken, precipitous country was inhabited. There were many winding, rocky roads, coiling themselves, Laocoon-like, about those huge peaks.

I had on a former occasion attentively stood within the little church-yard at this place, and, while the congregation was gathering, had watched with much interest the *debut* of aged mountaineers, tottering along with staff in palsied hand, as well as flaxen-haired, fair-skinned, blue-eyed young men and buxom mountain maidens, mounted upon their little wiry ponies, from this apparently inaccessible quarter. As they came into view at the edge of the little clearing which constituted the *hitching-ground*, the impression always made upon me by their sudden advent was that of some shaggy monster disgorging his prey, for

they seemed to come out of the solid mass of earth itself. The highway at the point where they came into sight was arched over by the thick foliage, or limbs rather of the giant oaks on either side of the road, and resembled the mouth of a great cave leading down into the bowels of the earth. But on this the occasion of my second visit I watched the *disgorgement* with keener interest than at my first, for at my last appointment at that place I had promised a long, lean, cadaverous-looking mountaineer that on my return to that point I would spend the night with him. He was from that, to me, hitherto unexplored region. On the occasion of my first visit I had been attracted by the awkward and ridiculous manner of his advent from the mouth of this imaginary monster. There was something truly ludicrous about it. The pony which he rode was small. It moved along with a kind of *double shuffle* step, and seemed rather to twist itself along than to walk with that free and easy motion common to the horse. All of its motive power seemed to be pent up in its shaggy

little tail, which was never at rest. Its spiral motion seemed to act as a propelling force upon the beast's body. The feet of the rider were only a few inches from the ground. The picture produced was that of a large boy riding a goat. The rider always carried a regular *undertaker's look* on his face. This solemn demeanor and correspondingly austere and sorrowful deportment observable in every movement and look of this denizen of the hills made a rich setting to the scene which I am trying to describe. As the pony moved forward the rider seemed to proceed *one side at a time*. One side went forward with a quick, spasmodic jerk, and came to a complete stop; when another spiral motion of the pony's tail imparted the necessary force, and the other side was likewise carried forward to its stopping-place. In this amusing manner the pony and its rider made remarkable speed. The reader can readily imagine what a ridiculous picture all of these things combined produced.

As I stood watching the egress of these denizens of the "everlasting hills" on that mem-

orable afternoon my eyes at last caught sight of my promised host. The *propeller* had lost none of its activity since I beheld the twain at my last visit, but the *undertaker's* look had apparently grown a shade sadder, which perhaps was the natural outgrowth of the thought that a preacher would soon be a guest at his secluded mountain home.

So I would indeed have the pleasure and privilege of traversing the regions beyond. I confess to no little degree of excitement and curious expectancy at the thought of being swallowed up by the frowning mountains, which I have already described.

The sermon was concluded, and we took the road leading to the home of my host. It was to me a long, lonesome ride, notwithstanding the scenery was magnificently grand, frequently challenging all effort at description. We wound around mountains, crossed over lofty spurs, descended into dark ravines, and traversed beautiful valleys; yet I felt depressed during the entire journey. This feeling of depression may have arisen from several causes

—the reaction of the nervous system after preaching; the warm, hazy, unseasonable weather for February; the sad visage and diffidence of my companion; or the thought that possibly I was being *swallowed* by the imaginary monster which I had pictured to myself as disgorging its prey at the little chapel. Any one of these causes, or all of them combined, may have produced the melancholy feelings that depressed my soul during that long, tedious journey.

But these gloomy spirits were destined to an early grave. We at last reined up our steeds in front of Abe Grimshaw's house—for this was the name of my host—and the tidy and inviting appearance of things was evidence that this would be a pleasant place to rest, and such I found it to be by many actual experiences. The house was a double cabin, overgrown with vines. The large logs from which it was constructed, where exposed on the outside of the building, were covered with moss, indicating that it was a very old building. The present occupant had inherited it

from his father, who built it while the wigwams of the Cherokees dotted the valleys of the Eastatoe and Oolenoi, and the red man sought undisturbed his game upon the beautiful banks of the Keeowee. It nestled down in one of those beautiful coves so frequently met with by the traveler who dares to traverse the far-famed Blue Ridge. It seemed to be endeavoring to hide itself away from the rest of the world, and verily it had succeeded. For quite a century the old building had been hemmed in by the lofty spurs of the Blue Ridge. The busy world was unconscious of its existence, and the inmates of that lonely home had known little during all that space of time of the affairs of the world, or even of the State in which their home was located.

Primitive customs, primitive furniture, primitive *every thing*, prevailed here. There upon the bare walls hung the old-fashioned dinner-horn that had summoned a past as well as a present generation to many an old-fashioned dinner. Upon the antlers of a buck hung the old-time *flint and steel* rifle that had

served perhaps four or five generations. It was brought from the Highlands of Scotland by an ancestor of the present occupant of this secluded home. Every thing wore an air of antiquity, even to the pewter basin in which the family bathed their hands and faces. Amid such scenes as these my melancholy spirits fled away, and I felt as though I had been transported to one of the mediæval homes of the Highlands of Scotland.

Dinner was announced. The crude earthenware, the wooden spoons and bowls, and the large gourd that contained the milk and which took the place of a pitcher, together with many such things, pointed to an age that has long since passed away.

Such was the home of Abe Grimshaw. To one reared out from under the shadow of these mountains such articles of furniture were rare indeed, and spoke eloquently of

The days of auld lang syne.

There are many such homes in "the land of the sky," where the grating noise of cards that comb the fleece of the mountain sheep

into rolls for the spinner's hand may yet greet the ear; where the lonesome hum of the spinning-wheel of long ago and the dull *thump, thump,* of the massive loom of our great-grandmothers are still heard.

What interest could we justly expect these isolated mountaineers to take in any of the great national issues of the day? It makes very little difference with them as to who is President of the United States, or even as to who is Governor of their own State. The great phosphate interests, so long a bone of contention in their native State, as well as the contest between State and denominational schools; the historic and eventful days of 1876, together with all the throes incident to the new birth of an oppressed and once down-trodden State—all these things combined have no charms for them. They are an *independent* class of citizens, as incapable of grasping great national issues, of recognizing the justice and equity of State or United States laws when conflicting with what they conceive to be their inalienable rights, of appreciating the general

benefit of a common government, as their soil is of producing the fleecy staple of their native State.

So much I learned during my visit to Abe Grimshaw's. When our conversation, by merest accident, turned upon the great struggle between the States my sad-faced host remarked: "We uns never fout on nary side; 'cause 'twa'n't nothin' to us. But it seemed like they wer' 'termined to press us in anyhow. Them 'light duty men' done a sight o' devilment in thes eparts. They wer' afeard to fight the'r-selves, and hung around here to arrest us. There wer' a whole ridgement of 'em camped over at Tunnel Hill, an' they s'arched this country from Dan to Beersheba, pretendin' to be huntin' deserters; an' they cotch lots of our boys an' sent 'em off. Some of 'em had been, an' had quit an' come home, 'cause 'twa'n't no war of the'rn; an' some of 'em never had been, 'cause they didn't see no use of fightin' that-a-way. Let them that had the niggers fight. But them 'light duty men' 'lowed that nobody didn't have no right to quit an' come

home. It was always powerful strange to me that a man couldn't quit fightin' when he wanted to. If a man wanted to quit an' come home for to see his wife, 'twa'n't none o' their business; seemed monstrous mysterfyin' to me that a man couldn't take a little blowin'-spell when he got outen wind a-fightin' them yankees. But they 'lowed 'twas their business. They never put their han's on me, shoar's I'm named Abe. What powder I had to burn [an' powder got mighty sca'ce] I was goin' to burn it agin the deer, and not agin my fellow-creetur. But they got Sam Houston. Sam had been off, an' had come back. They tuck an' tied him, an' dragged him off in the night, an' that was the las' we ever hearn of poor Sam Houston. Poor Miss Houston was so distressed about it that the next mornin' after they tuck Sam she tuck her little baby gal, 'Cinda, thess a year ole, an' followed on after 'em, barefooted an' bareheaded. The poor creetur went as fur as Columbia, but when she got there she wer' plum beyant herself, and they tuck her up an' put her in the 'sylum,

an' she died there; an' Sam was shot fur desertin,' I reckon—leastwise we han't hearn nothin' frum him sense. An' 'Cinda—all the chile they had—was left alone an' by herself in that big city. But some good 'oman tuck her an' brung her up to a smart-sized gal; but when 'Cinda got big ernough to think for herself she come back to these parts, an' she is one 'o the best 'o 'omankind. Poor creetur! every time I see her I think of Miss Houston's face, as she followed after them good-fur-nuthin' 'light duty men' that tuck an' tied Sam an' dragged him off the same as if he were some wild varmint."

Such, in part, was Abe Grimshaw's conversation. He had spoken but few words prior to this volume of sectional history, and I had come to the conclusion that my host was one of those say-nothing characters so often encountered everywhere. But all men, I have observed, will talk, and talk fluently, when you draw them out along the line they are accustomed to think. Abe Grimshaw had doubtless thought much of the sad experiences through

which his secluded community had passed during the great civil struggle that shook our entire country from center to circumference. He had his own ideas of political economy and of the great principles of justice and equity that should influence the actions of every subject relative to the State. They may have been narrow and crude; but how often is it the case, relative to such things, that the more learned, and even the most profound, statesmen drift, in their estimates of such principles, to an opposite extreme!

Man is constitutionally pre-eminently a selfish being not in that vulgar acceptation of the term wherein he looks to his own interest always, and never thinks of the rights and immunities of others, but in that higher sense wherein he is bound not only by the promptings of his own nature, but by the truths of revelation to love, peace, and home and family, for the sake of the boon pleasures that spring therefrom. To love my home and offspring and interest better than those of another is virtuous and commendable, and is

essential to the preservation of chastity and society.

Abe Grimshaw and his intimate companions had espoused the cause of neither side. Who will be bold enough to brand them as traitors and outlaws? "Let them that's got the niggers do the fightin'" may not have been a patriotic utterance, but when the sentiment contained therein is reduced to its last analysis, it will be readily seen that it contains the basis of all human action. It is the common plane upon which all individuality moves. It is true that Abe Grimshaw's ignorance was any thing else but commendable, but refusing to fight for a cause in which he conceived that he had no earthly interest was praiseworthy—at least from a divine stand-point. To have enlightened his mind may have, doubtless would have, changed his opinions. But we are dealing here not in theories, but with stern realities. He was inflexible in what he conceived to be his duty. May it ever be so with us!

The hazy February Sabbath had closed, and now the leady hues of morning were peeping

into my little room at Abe Grimshaw's. The atmosphere was fresh and cutting, evincing one of those abrupt changes from autumn-like weather to that of winter, so frequent in that climate. The ground was covered with one vast sheet of snow, and I heartily realized, as I stepped from my little chamber, that the pleasant weather of the day before had been instrumental in inducing me to leave home without wraps of any kind. But later, when I threw myself into the saddle, wrapped in one of Abe Grimshaw's home-woven bed-blankets, I was the recipient of some sound advice: "We uns have a sayin' amongst us that a wise man always takes his umberrille with him, fur any fool would think to take it when the rain is a-pourin' down."

Thus ended my visit to Abe Grimshaw's, and I rode away meditating upon the pointed advice I had received and the bits of sectional history I had heard. I had proceeded on the return trip only a few miles, however, when, to my horror, I discovered that I had lost my road. My dejected spirit on the day before

had debarred me from taking that notice of the objects along the road which we passed that otherwise I would have done; besides, the snow had so covered the road and had changed the general appearance of the country to such an extent that it required familiarity with the general topography, at least, of the country to keep the way.

Lost in the mountains! and that, too, in a snow-storm. I had pictured the little dwelling of Abe Grimshaw as *lost* amid the towering peaks, but alas! the personal reality of such a thought was by no means so pleasant. Never did a creature more earnestly desire to be disgorged into the little clearing near the little mountain chapel, of which I have already spoken, than I did. But "it is an evil wind that blows no one any good;" and had I not lost my way on that occasion perhaps this bit of the biography of a deserter's daughter would never have been written, and the mountain cabin would, perhaps, have ever remained veiled in mystery.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIND ON THE LONELY MOUNTAIN-SIDE.

Gloom is upon thy lonely hearth,
O silent house! once filled with mirth;
Sorrow is in the breezy sound
Of thy tall cedars whispering round.

I PRESSED forward through the snow like a mariner without a chart or compass. A blue column of smoke shot up among the leafless branches of the trees to my left, and, although I could not see whence it came, I was fully persuaded that it issued from some dwelling. I determined to seek its shelter; for I was not only lost, but I was shivering with cold. I therefore turned my horse into the pathway that led in the direction of the smoke. I was not disappointed, for I had clambered along the steep mountain-side for the space of scarcely half a mile when through the heavy timber I caught a glimpse of the little cabin whence came the smoke.

It was located on the side and near the base

of a large mountain. Fronting the cabin was a beautiful valley of several hundred acres of arable land, through which the limpid Oolenoi made its way like a silver thread. The valley was inestimably valuable as a corn-farm. The rich, alluvial soil, as the thickly studded stalks stripped of their foliage readily indicated, made the valley a paradise indeed for the corn-growers. Thousands of bushels must have been harvested therefrom at the last gathering-time; but, strange to say, besides the grain-houses that studded the outskirts of this broad corn-field, there could be seen but one lone cabin wherein there were any evidences of life, the one of which I have just spoken, and from which came the column of blue smoke. It was built upon the side of the mountain, its very site impressing one with the thought that the builders must have regarded the land of the great alluvial plain too precious to be taken up by this crude structure.

The cabin was a very old one. The stately cedars that bordered the yard were so ar-

ranged as to leave no doubt in the mind that they were planted by the hand of man. The logs of the cabin were partially decayed, and the roof was overgrown with moss. An ivy sprig, planted, doubtless, by some hand that had long since ceased to act, had climbed a giant oak, covering its trunk and branch; sucking away its very life like a vampire, by insensible degrees had long since accomplished its mission of death, and now the old monarch of the forest stood shorn of all its beauty and strength.

These things were unmistakable evidences of the great age of the little cabin. But as I stood before this isolated home I could not help asking myself these questions: "Where is the stock necessary to such a farm? where are the wagons, plows, and farm implements? where are the people necessary to till it?"

With this train of inquiries flashing through the mind, I knocked for admission. The call was answered by a decrepit old hag. She pretended to be very deaf, and when I asked the privilege of warming she feigned embarrass-

ment, such as is frequently observable in deaf people when they do not understand what is addressed to them. But a fat, red-faced, lazy-looking boy, the only inmate of the house except the old hag about whom we have just spoken, came to the rescue, and drawled out with a pusillanimous whine: "Uv course you uns is mor'n welcome to all the good you uns can get out'n them coals. Take er cher an' set down."

While he was addressing these words to the unexpected visitor he arose from his seat and carelessly placed his hand upon the low mantel-piece, knocking therefrom, as if by accident, a rusty old cow-bell, which rolled and tumbled over the floor as if it were a thing of life, and as if its mission in this world was to let people know that it possessed a clapper. The old hag shuffled toward the rolling bell and grasped it by the hook through which the girdle passes, and hastened with tottering step and palsied hand, which tested the ringing capacity of the metal to its utmost degree, to replace the noisy thing in its former position.

This accomplished, she seated herself in the opposite jam of the broad fire-place, dipped an old black pipe into the embers and puffed away, the very picture of aged ignorance, stupidity, and abandonment.

The awkward youth kept his lazy attitude, gazing brazenly into the visitor's face while he propounded the following questions and many more like them: "Wher' is you uns frum? Whut is you unses business in these here parts? Has you uns been in these diggin's long?"

I tried as best I could to satisfy his curiosity, and in return asked him to whom the plantation embracing the large valley belonged.

"Mister Fox," was his ready answer.

"And where does Mr. Fox live?" I asked.

"Don't know, sur, but he lives a good ways frum here, beca'se when he comes up fur to tend an' gether his crap I hearn his han's say it tuck 'em two days fur to come."

"And what does he do with his corn?" I asked.

"He puts it in 'em houses down thar in the

valley, an' sells some uv it, and hauls some uv it away. Me an' granny stays here to look arter his things. Mister Fox is a mighty clever man, he is."

During this conversation I had ample opportunity to examine my surroundings. Two old pine bedsteads, a few stools and crude split-bottomed chairs, an old greasy table, a broken looking-glass, and a cupboard containing a few old-fashioned blue-flowered cups and plates, made up the furniture entire, with the exception of the cow-bell, the old hag's pipe, a supply of home-raised tobacco which hung in its natural state from a stick placed across the joist, the stalk having been split a part of its length and placed astride the stick, and a few bunches of dried boneset, life-everlasting, and other herbs, which constituted the old woman's medical supply for the winter.

While surveying the apartment two things, although of very little consequence apparently, impressed me. One was the problem how the few coals that smoldered upon the hearth could produce that column of blue smoke that

belched with such energy from the chimney-top, but the soot may have been on fire. This was the only solution of the problem that I could arrive at. The other was simply this: As my eyes wandered over the apartment I saw this sentence cut with a knife into the plain, unpainted boards of the mantel-piece:

"Cinda Houston Was Born July 10th, 1862."

Could it be that I was in the cabin that constituted, in days gone by, the happy home of the unfortunate Sam Houston? Was it he, so rudely torn from his home and dragged to a deserter's doom, who cut these rude letters chronicling the happy event of the birth of his only child? It must have been so.

Truly it was a strange place as well as a strange way to record such an event. Nevertheless it was in accord with many of the acts and customs of these simple-hearted, plain mountaineers.

I was so impressed with the bit of personal reminiscence relative to Sam Houston that I had received from Abe Grimshaw the previous night, together with these rude letters cut

into the boards of the mantel-piece, that I asked the lubberly youth: "From whom did Mr. Fox buy this plantation, and how long has he owned it?"

"Don't know, sur, but mebby granny kin tell you," was his reply.

But granny was so deaf that we could make her understand nothing whatever, and I was compelled to leave the lonely cabin minus the information I so much desired.

The youth, at my request, seemed overwilling to accompany me to the main road, and to direct me, when I parted from him about a mile from the mysterious cabin, so that I could not again miss the road.

Thus I left the cabin over which was hung a veil of mystery. But to me that veil was afterward lifted, and I was permitted to look in upon things that had long remained covered up to the outside world. What I saw and learned are faithfully recorded in these pages, and form a piece of sectional history which the pen of the historian has never recorded. Events none the less interesting, however, on

that account, but a close study of sectional history will give the earnest inquirer after truth a keener insight into the general truths, and a heartier appreciation of the real state of affairs as they existed during the dark days of the Southern Confederacy, and the subsequent years of misrule and oppression.

Now that the effulgent sun of the New South sheds his rays over hill-top and valley, let the rising generation imitate the virtues of their fathers, and grow wiser and better as they read in these pages a faithful portrayal of the cowardly acts and nefarious deeds of some who were unworthy of the name or the place of a Southron.

CHAPTER X.

RANDAL FOX, WHO HAD NO LOVE FOR WAR.

DURING the stormy days of 1860, when the black clouds of civil war were gathering thick and fast, when excitement was at its highest, and the clarion blast of the call to arms was heard over the hills and through the vales of our beloved Carolina, Randal Fox, with soldierly bearing, flashy uniform, and flushed face, might have been seen organizing his company on the court-house green of his native county.

Captain Fox, as he paraded his company of brave Carolinians, with their gray uniforms and palmetto buttons, up and down the principal streets of the little county seat, was indeed a martial-looking character. As the children and ladies of the little village donned their palmetto rosettes and waved their little flags and handkerchiefs at the passing column, he indeed was a foe, could the "boys in blue"

have seen him, terrible to look upon. Defiance and victory were written on every lineament of his countenance. The women and children, at least, thought: "Woe be unto that part of the blue column that Randal Fox shall strike!" And indeed he would have given the Union army no little trouble had his spirit and courage mounted to that high point in battle that was observable during these dress parades and preparatory stages. But alas! when the picket guns of the first Manassas were heard in the distance Captain Fox grew pale, his teeth chattered, and his knees smote together; and as he passed hither and thither among his men, unable to stand still for a single moment, he declared to his brave company that, "on account of a change of climate and sleeping out at night he had contracted chills," which he thought would wholly unfit him for the active duties of regular service. But when his company was wheeled into line of battle, and when hundreds of pieces on both sides began to belch forth death, the excited and cowardly chieftain pusillanimously bellowed

out: "*Run, boys, for Heaven's sake, run; we'll every one be killed!*" But the boys did not run. How overjoyed, indeed, the craven captain would have been had the brave company of Carolinians obeyed his orders, or rather the involuntary exclamation of a cowardly spirit! But the individuals composing that company, virtually without a leader, were made of *sterner stuff* than their nominal captain.

Later, however, there was given him the opportunity which he coveted. A shell burst in front of his company, tearing up a mass of earth, but otherwise doing no damage except a minute fragment which took a bit of hide from the captain's forefinger. His screams were heard above the din of battle, and they were piteous indeed. Holding up his hand, as will a hound puppy his foot when it is hurt, he flew to the rear at a speed closely resembling that of a renowned trotting-horse of the present day, and with yells very much like those of the beast to which we have just compared him.

The battle was fought and the victory won,

notwithstanding Captain Fox's *forced* and *unavoidable* absence. The Southern Confederacy was justly proud of the action of her brave boys. The governmental authorities, therefore, very justly concluded that the further service of one who had contracted chills in, and had given one hand to, the defense of his country was not needed in active warfare. Captain Randal Fox was therefore discharged from active service, and ever afterward, during the great civil struggle, his name appeared on the list of "home guards," "light duty men," etc. In these companies the captain could always be seen at the head of the little column, with his wounded arm supported by a strip of scarlet cloth, doubtless intended as emblematical of the blood he had given for his country's defense; and in his countenance and about his person there was an air of one who had fought and conquered. The children of the community, whose fathers were on the tented field, looked upon him as a great soldier, and their eyes dilated with large wonder when he told his *yarns* about bloody battle-

fields and narrow escapes. But brave soldiers' wives whispered to each other that he was a coward, and ought to be at the front.

Up to the time of the battle in which Captain Fox received that *fearful* wound, which disabled his arm for four years, he had been looked upon by his fellow-citizens as an honest man, and doubtless he was. But it is astonishing how *one failure* to meet the reasonable and just demands of our fellow-beings frequently develops a character wholly different from that formerly possessed. Captain Fox had failed, miserably so, as a soldier. His conscience was smitten; he felt condemned in the estimation of his fellow-citizens. The arm in the sling was a living evidence to himself, as well as to his countrymen, that he was a coward, a liar, and therefore dishonored and dishonest. Whatever virtue he may have had as a citizen prior to the battle of Manassas went down on that (to him) fatal field. He was self-condemned; what could men expect of him but falsehood, treachery, and deceit? He rode at the head of his little column of

beardless boys and disabled men; but if any patriotism had ever glowed in his heart, it had now gone to its eternal grave. What did he care for the Southern Confederacy? Though he diligently sought deserters, what was he but a deserter of the meanest kind? Which was the more honorable—a deserter who conscientiously believed that the war was of no vital interest to him, and who therefore hid himself away in the mountains that surrounded his home, or one who must have recognized the importance of the pending issue, but in spite of his convictions hid himself behind a refuge of lies?

There was not in all Carolina a more persevering hunter of deserters than Randal Fox. How natural! Accused of a crime ourselves, how we would dislike to be brought for trial before a jury every member of which themselves had been held in the public estimation as guilty of the very crime for which we were to be tried! Human nature would teach us, no matter what defense we might be able to produce, that the final verdict would be *guilty.*

Each juryman would feel called upon to render such a verdict, in order to cover up his own criminality in the eyes of the public. No wonder, then, that Randal Fox was zealous in bringing deserters to justice; it was natural. It was simply poor, weak, human nature struggling to vindicate its deformities and to cover up its own defects. Had Randal Fox stopped here it would not have been so bad, but criminality is progressive. From the little lonely cabin on the mountain-side comes a wail of agony to which heaven will listen and which God will revenge.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ARREST.

THE moon lit up the towering peaks of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The silence that reigned everywhere was oppressive. It seemed that the stars themselves were listening, while the massive piles of earth and stone, that stood out under the canopy of heaven like silent sentinels, seemed to be breathlessly awaiting some awful tragedy.

A small party of men wended their way up the beautiful valley of the limpid Oolenoi, with Captain Fox at their head. Their feet were muffled, and under the mellow rays of the moon they looked like moving specters. They press forward noiselessly, toward the little cabin which we have described in a former chapter. It is the home of Sam Houston, and the day that has just closed was the birthday of his much-beloved little 'Cinda, July 10th, 1863. The fond father sat dandling his

little innocent first-born on his knee, utterly unconscious of the pall of sorrow that was about to be thrown over his peaceful home, and of the mantle of suffering which was destined so soon to fall upon his prattling babe and innocent wife.

The approaching party drew nearer and yet nearer, until at last they surrounded the house and called for Sam Houston.

The inmates of that happy home exchanged significant glances. The dutiful, loving young wife grew pale and almost swooned. Her woman's instinct told her what would be the final issue. With true woman's spirit she assumed that it was largely her fault that Sam Houston was at home as a deserter. If he was shot, how could she bear the thought that his blood was on her hands. She had written to him repeatedly of her loneliness, and this may have induced him to leave the army. Such thoughts flashed through her mind as she stood confronting her husband.

Brave Sam Houston—for if he was a deserter, he was not a coward—in the meantime

threw open the door, and gave himself up to Captain Fox and his men. He was pale, but not from a sense of fear; it came from thought of the anguish and grief that the incident was destined to beget in the heart of his devoted young wife. He thought not of himself, but of his wife and babe. He tried to comfort his weeping spouse; he bid her be strong for 'Cinda's sake. The scene was indeed an affecting one. When he embraced his prattling babe and loving wife for the last time his troubled heart heaved and swelled within his breast as if it would burst with grief, and the brave deserter gave vent to his feelings of anguish in smothered, choking sobs. They were not the whimpering sobs of a pusillanimous coward, but the magnanimous outburst of the feelings of one of nature's noblemen.

They produced a pair of handcuffs, but the brave mountaineer protested against such treatment. He begged the privilege of going with them as a free man, assuring them that he would make no effort to gain his liberty. They persisted, while he appealed touchingly

for his privilege as a man of honor. It was not obsequiousness; it was the protest of a brave, manly heart. It was, however, a protest which Captain Fox was incapable of appreciating; so mean and cowardly was his spirit that he would have handcuffed a harmless boy. Magnanimity, of the lowest degree, is rarely, if ever, found to exist in a real cowardly heart.

They handcuffed Sam Houston. The wife saw it through her tears; she heard the metallic click of the steel bracelets. It was a fatal sight and sound to the poor woman, for immediately her tears ceased to flow; grief, no longer able to find an outlet through sobs and tears, began to consume the brain. Those were the last tears that ever flowed from the eyes of the grief-burdened woman. Already a wild, cold, metallic look darted from her once soft, gray eyes. She was thenceforward, to the day of her death, a maniac.

Her mind, in the twinkling of an eye, had swept forward and had unerringly anticipated the sad results of the fatal work of that night.

A handcuffed husband riddled with bullets and bleeding at every wound was indelibly photographed upon her heart. Pressing her infant daughter to her bosom, and crouching in a corner of the rude dwelling, she took no further notice of the little party of men which led her husband away through the broad valley to the little clump of bushes where their horses remained in waiting.

As Captain Fox led his doomed prisoner across the broad, alluvial plain he thought of its value, set his heart upon it, and began to lay plans to possess it.

Is there any thing in a name? There may not be, and yet how frequently it is the case that a name indicates the character, in some degree, of its possessor! The Bible, especially the Old Testament, abounds in instances where the name of an individual is an index to his life and character. Abraham, Naomi, Job, together with many others, are beautiful examples.

It is true that these names grew out of prominent traits of character and certain en-

vironments and circumstances; but may not the hand of God have been in it? Can we really refer any thing to mere chance? We know that God changed the name of Abram, and he did it for a purpose. He desired that the very meaning and associations of the name Abraham might beget within the hearts of all true believers a zeal and a profound admiration and love for his cause.

What countenance does not blush with shame when the veil is lifted by the hand of God from that cave to which Lot and his two daughters fled at the destruction of the evil cities of the plain? Moab, the offspring of the incestuous crime, means "son of his father." Trace that name through the annals of the divinely inspired records and see how the very name Moab stands related to all that is revolting. Was there no design on the part of God, in forever fastening that name on the descendants of the wicked daughter of Lot?

May not God, who knows all things and who overrules all things, frequently fix certain names on certain individuals? Abigail, in

speaking to David of her churlish husband, Nabal, said: "As his name is so is he." Christ likewise alludes to Peter, and thus leads us to think that there is at least something in a name.

Of course this is mere speculation; but may we not speculate when the name of the character whose black deeds mar these pages suggests it?

"Randal" is Anglo-Saxon, and means "house-wolf." Randal Fox! How potently suggestive the very name! He had invaded a peaceful home, bound with iron fetters a brave man, and by this cowardly act he had dethroned the reason of a loving wife, thus bringing untold suffering and injustice upon the innocent.

But not yet satisfied, he combines the low, mean, cowardly spirit of the wolf with the cunning of the fox.

As the little party pushed forward over the steep, winding road the Captain bid the others move onward and leave the prisoner in the rear with him, that they might have a few moments' private conversation.

Ahab-like, the scheming Fox proposed to give Sam Houston, not "a better place" nor "its worth in money," but his liberty, if he would convey to him a title-deed to the beautiful valley which they had just crossed.

Sam Houston did not know of the condition of his wife. He had mistaken her apparent calmness at the time of his departure for one of composure, one of brave determination to make the best of her situation. Had he known her real condition, could he have seen her form crouching at that moment in the corner of the little log cabin, the issue of this proposal may have been very different to what it really was.

But Sam Houston had already made a record as a brave, dutiful soldier. Up to the time of his desertion there had been nothing against him. He was conscious of that record, and notwithstanding he had left the army without a furlough, he believed that mercy would be granted him, and he had determined to meet the issue like the brave man that he was, re-enter the army, if his life was spared, and fight to its close, or till some bullet should

send him to his eternal home. During his silent ride, thus far, he had called upon an all-wise and gracious God to witness these resolutions, and to give grace sufficient for their consummation. He had mentally committed himself and family to the keeping of a kind Providence; his resolutions and purposes were fixed. Therefore, when this criminal proposal greeted his ear, his manly form reared itself erect in the saddle, holy indignation flashed from every lineament of his bronzed face, and a look of chivalrous defiance darted from his large blue eyes, as he replied, in substance: "My grandfather's own hand cut the virgin forest from that valley. His trusty rifle drove the wolves from the door of my little cabin home in my father's childhood days, while my grandmother planted the stately cedars that girdle the little log house. There my father lived and died, and there shall be the home of my wife and child, though I fall in the front of the battle. Would you rob not only me, but my wife and child, of a home? It is in your power to take my life, but never my home."

Thus foiled, there was no scheming Jezebel to come to the rescue of this modern Ahab. But Fox's heart was blacker than even Ahab's, He grasped the breech of the heavy navy revolver that hung at his side, and from its smoking muzzle flew the bullet that sent the handcuffed prisoner to his last resting-place. The poor man reeled and fell manacled to the ground.

The pale moon itself seemed to shiver with fear. The silent mountain-peaks kept silence no longer, but there belched from one and then from the other the echo of that fatal shot, and at last the distant hills repeated in grief-burdened groans the dying sound.

The incident was easily explained to Fox's three companions, who hastened back to the bloody scene. "He attempted to escape," was the readily framed falsehood.

They took up the lifeless body and bore it a few miles further; then they attached weights to it and sunk it in the pure waters of the beautiful Keeowee. The spring-like waters almost seemed to blush as they swallowed up

the lifeless trunk of the murdered man. The gurgling sweep of the river certainly seemed, there in the silence of the night, like the suppressed murmur of unseen spirits. But there upon the river-bank they swear to each other eternal secrecy.

No fiery prophet appeared upon the scene of the awful tragedy with the announcement that a like fate awaited the foul murderer, as occurred in the case of Ahab when he took possession of humble Naboth's home. But God is just; vengeance is his; he will repay.

Crime is indeed progressive. The captain had shown the white feather at Manassas, but he slays his man at last, and alas! in cold blood. From cowardice to murder. Wisely, therefore, does St. Peter place bravery first in his catalogue of Christian virtues. "Add to your faith virtue"—that is, courage. Convictions without courage to back them, whether in the Christian's warfare or in the stern battles of secular life, are one of the most fruitful sources of crime.

If Captain Fox, who had once been recog-

nized as a good citizen, had possessed even that degree of what is sometimes called *brute courage* requisite to bear up his convictions as a Confederate soldier, his hands would never have been stained with the blood not only of Sam Houston, but also of that of his innocent wife.

CHAPTER XII.

SAM HOUSTON'S WIFE'S JOURNEY TO A LIVING TOMB, AND HER DEATH.

THE bright morning sun of July 11, 1863, was just beginning to throw long shadows across the beautiful valley of the Oolenoi when Sam Houston's wife emerged from her cabin home. She pressed the innocent little 'Cinda close to her bosom as she plodded her way along the steep, winding roads. She was bareheaded and bare-footed. In this condition she wended her way for twenty miles along the serpentine roads to the nearest railway station. In time of peace she would have been apprehended and detained, but the reader must remember that the entire country was in a state of ebullition. She was recognized, perhaps, by no one except Abe Grimshaw, who knew nothing then of the occurrence of the preceding night, and he did not even dream of her state of mind, thinking that she was simply going to the house of some neighbor-

ing mountaineer on some errand requiring great haste. But when the truth came to light that she was missing from home, then he remembered the wild look, perceivable even at the distance he was from her, that was on her face.

The arrest of Houston had been so successfully conducted that no one knew the particulars of it, nor even the fact itself, except those who had participated in it. The community realized the fact that both he and his wife were gone from home. The cause of their mysterious disappearance was not known in the community for some years after the fearful tragedy of the night when Houston was apprehended and so foully murdered.

It is necessary, also, to say in this connection that the death of Sam Houston gave the Confederacy, from that time forth, three good soldiers. The men who accompanied Randal Fox on his bloody mission of murder and robbery on that eventful night became so disgusted with that department of service, and so conscience-smitten, that they forthwith gave

up their commissions as "light duty men," enlisted in active service, and fought to the close of the war. Two of them fell upon the bloody and historic field of Appomattox, and the other returned home, and on his dying bed, several years after the close of that bloody struggle, made a full confession of the horrible work of that night.

I have digressed thus far in order to show how the matter of which I am writing came to light. To resume, however, the thread of my narrative: Sam Houston's wife reached the little railroad station unmolested. She entered the coach of the Columbia-bound passenger train, and with the small sum of Confederate money which her devoted husband had saved, and which he thrust into her hand on the eve of his departure, she paid her way through to the capital city of the State. Crouched down in one corner of the coach, pressing her infant close to her heaving bosom, she was indeed a picture sad to look upon. The prattling infant, with its smiling face, unconscious of the sorrows that filled its moth-

er's heart, afforded a strangely contrasting picture to that of the crouching mother.

As the deranged mother boarded the train Randal Fox observed and recognized her, for he had returned from his bloody mission. He quickly read the result of his fearful crime; and, to add to its horror, there was an expression of satisfaction on his smooth, *milk and honey* countenance. The foul game he was playing seemed destined now to be a success. O the depravity of fallen man! Who can fathom the depths to which he is capable of falling? Whatever may have been his reputed character prior to the war, whatever may have been his virtues as a peaceful, law-abiding citizen before that great struggle which tried the souls of men, we now behold Randal Fox fallen to the utmost depths of criminality. He now, indeed,

> Hath into monstrous habits put the graces
> That once were his, and is become as black
> As if besmeared in hell.

He too boarded the train, and sat in another coach, apparently unconcerned, and affable to

a degree that was unusual even for him. He was determined to watch closely the issue of his deep-laid scheme.

Once within the limits of the proud old capital on the Congaree, whither the poor, demented wife supposed they had carried her husband, she rushed hither and thither, closely scanning every passing company of militia and every straggling soldier; but, disappointed at every turn, the poor creature sat down in the street, having laid her infant upon the bare ground, whence her meaningless chattering and hysterical laughter soon attracted the attention of the police. They apprehended her, and it is almost useless to state that she was committed to a cell in the lunatic asylum. A kind and compassionate lady took the infant to her home, and reared the little orphan to womanhood.

One month after the committal to the asylum the lifeless body of Sam Houston's wife was consigned to a grave in the public cemetery in Columbia, S. C.

Randal Fox, during the time that had

elapsed since her committal to the asylum, had kept himself posted; and, as soon as he heard of the death of his helpless, demented victim, he looked upon his scheme as perfected. For in the *interim* of her incarceration in a living tomb he had gone to the lonely little cabin on the mountain-side, and had stolen therefrom the land documents of Sam Houston, knowing that there were no heirs living except the little infant, whose origin was now wrapped in profound mystery. Therefore, realizing that the property would, under a law of the State, be sold for taxes, he determined to *doubly* secure the rich valley upon which his heart was set.

The reader has already anticipated the result. He forged such alterations in the land documents as were necessary to secure the property. Furthermore, he allowed the property to be sold for taxes, and bought it at the sheriff's sale for a nominal sum. Thus the property was secured by titles from the sheriff of the county, and his forgery covered up, at least for a time.

Surely Tom Thaxton spoke the truth when he uttered that sentiment relative to a future judgment. The penal codes of this world can never mete out justice to such criminals as this heartless murderer and robber. The divine fiat exercised in that awful injunction, at the last day, "Depart, ye workers of iniquity, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," can alone dispense proper punishment to such sinners.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW 'CINDA RETAINED HER NAME.

No stream from its source
Flows seaward, how lonely soever its course,
But what some land is gladdened. No star ever rose
And set, without influence somewhere. Who knows
What earth needs from earth's lowest creature? No life
Can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife,
And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.

—*Lucile.*

THE reader will, as a natural consequence, feel an interest in the little orphan so cruelly deprived of father and mother. The name, "'Cinda," was all that she inherited for a number of years from the fond parents who had fallen victims to the avarice of Randal Fox. That name, however, was destined to cling to her. The lady who became her foster-mother visited the poor, demented mother while in the asylum. Every means was used to get some possible clue to her name, but the reason of the poor woman was so completely

dethroned that all measures failed to reveal who the poor creature was, or whence she came. However, at her last hour on earth she called for her infant. Reason seemed to return for a short period; and when the little creature was brought into the cell where the poor woman lay dying, she clasped it in her arms and imprinted many kisses on its little cheek, as she murmured its name—"'Cinda, 'Cinda." Then, pressing the babe closer to her bosom, she said: "They took you away from me, 'Cinda, but God has brought you back again. They killed papa, too, because he came back from the war to see us, but now we are going to see him. See, papa is coming for—coming for—for—"

These last words were uttered with great effort, and the last sentence was staid from completion by the hand of death. Thus the poor and doubly wronged mother fell back upon the pillow of her couch, cold in death. There was a smile on her features, wafting back to mortals the assurance of that ecstacy and joy that lit up her pure soul as it made

its advent into the unseen land of rest, and which was an earnest of everlasting happiness.

Thus died the mother of 'Cinda Houston, leaving little evidence as to who she was. One thing, however, was evident to those who witnessed her death, and that was of very great importance in determining her identity. She was evidently the wife of a deserter who had been apprehended and shot for his misdemeanor. Her wearing apparel and her dialect gave evidence of the fact that she was from the mountainous portion of the State. Besides these evidences pointing to the place of her nativity, the train officials remembered bringing such a woman into Columbia from the extreme western portion of the State. All of these evidences combined pointed unmistakably to the place of her nativity.

'Cinda was, however, retained in the home of Mrs. Depew, the kind lady who had taken her when the poor mother was committed to the asylum. She was reared as one of Mrs.

Depew's own children, and grew up to be an accomplished and beautiful lady. When she came to young womanhood her foster-mother gave her a complete history of her past life, and also of the death of her mother and her dying utterances, together with other facts that she had gathered during the eighteen years that had passed by since that sad death in the asylum.

Mrs. Depew thought best that 'Cinda should know of these mysteries that enshrouded the place of her nativity; for during those years she had gathered evidence not only confirming the hypothesis that 'Cinda's mother's home was in the extreme north-western portion of the State, but also that there had been *foul play* in the death of 'Cinda's father, and that the child had not only been robbed of father and mother, but also of a valuable valley on the Oolenoi. This intelligence was imparted to 'Cinda while her foster-mother was on a dying bed.

The war, with its terrible consequences, together with its *foulest* blot—the burning of Co-

lumbia—had deprived Mrs. Depew of all her property; yet the kind, benevolent matron had struggled, during all of these years, with the stern problems of life, as only devoted Southern women knew how to struggle; and verily she had succeeded in rearing and educating creditably a worthy family, and now, at her departure from this world, she thought best, if 'Cinda had really been robbed of her property, that she should know it, and, if possible, be put in a position to regain it.

Without tiring the reader with all the details, suffice it to say that after the death of Mrs. Depew 'Cinda Houston returned to the community whence came her mother, and at the time of my visit to Abe Grimshaw's was gathering testimony to reclaim the home of her parents.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DISTILLERY, AND DEATH OF RANDAL FOX.

THE reader will doubtless remember the blue column of smoke and the noisy cow-bell spoken of in a previous chapter. That column of smoke did not, indeed, ascend from the coals that slumbered on the hearth of that lonely cabin; neither was the cow-bell knocked accidentally from its resting-place on the mantel-board. There were other fires from which the column of smoke arose, and that bell had its mission in this world.

The death of Eugene Dudevant brought to light some hidden things connected with that cabin. Though he was an officer of the law, he was not free from violations of the law. He and Randal Fox were intimate friends, and were partners in business. Underneath that cabin there was a considerable excavation, or cellar, in which was conducted an immense distillery. The flues of this distillery were

built up into the large chimney of the dwelling, passing back of the large, old-fashioned fire-place into the flue of the chimney; hence the great volume of smoke on that eventful morning when the writer was accidentally ushered into the presence of the deaf old hag and the inquisitive *fat boy*. The bell was thrown from its position on the mantel, and picked up by the palsied hand of the old woman, that its ready tongue might tell in unmistakable language that a stranger was present, thus warning the operatives in the cellar to desist from any noise or conversation which might betray the existence of this hidden distillery.

The water necessary for distilling purposes was conveyed to the cellar through a buried pipe from a spring on the mountain-side. The pipe was so ingeniously fitted into the rock wall of the spring that it could not be discovered without tearing away the heavy stones that composed the wall. The natural declivity of the mountain, from the spring to the house, rendered it easy to bury the pipe so

completely as to thoroughly conceal all traces of it. There was also a natural inclined plane from the house to the nearest point on the river, so that it was easy to give an outlet to the water, in the same manner, into the river. The arrangement was so complete, in every particular, that no one would have suspected the existence of the huge stills, even while standing on the floor of the building, and that, too, within a few inches of their great copper caps.

Had it not been for the assassination of Eugene Dudevant these distilleries might have remained undiscovered to this day. Fox and Dudevant were partners in this illicit work, and when Dudevant was killed he had papers on his person not only revealing the existence of the distillery, but also showing that the entire plantation was mortgaged to him for money advanced to his partner. This was a revelation to the community at large, as well as to the officers, who had been Dudevant's most intimate friends.

The secluded yet beautiful valley of the

Oolenoi had yielded thousands of bushels of corn annually, but Randal Fox's wagons had, as the people thought, hauled the produce to his home in one of the Piedmont counties. But if those wagons had been closely inspected, the discovery would have been made that they contained whisky barrels, covered over with ears of corn to conceal them from view.

Year after year this illicit manufacture had continued; year after year that blue column of smoke had ascended to the sky from the chimney of that lonely cabin; year after year the products of the beautiful valley had been converted into that accursed fluid which for a number of years had spread crime, sorrow, and death through all the Piedmont region, as well as the lower counties of the old Palmetto State.

Who can estimate the amount of suffering and crime that Randal Fox was directly and indirectly responsible for during the twenty years that he tilled the beautiful valley of the Oolenoi? Is not crime amazingly progressive?

If justice is ever vindicated, and punishment administered to poor crime-stained mortals, will there not have to be a court beyond this life, and a tribunal infinitely greater and wiser than man, before which transgressors must appear? Eternity alone will reveal the criminality of many who have lived and died on this earth respected by their fellow-men. Like the distillery under that crude cabin, there is much of man's criminality that is *under ground.* We are startled sometimes when such disclosures as that about which we have been writing are made; but these revelations, fearful as they are, evidence the existence of much that will never come to light this side of the final judgment of man. These disclosures are like yonder granite crag jutting from the mountain-side—its tremendous proportions are buried in the sands of the earth.

What a day will that be when the hidden things, the awful crimes of men like Randal Fox, shall be brought to light, in all of their hideous and voluminous proportions, by the

omnipotent hand of God! Truly it will be a day when the wicked will call upon the "rocks and hills to fall upon them," that they may no longer look upon the desolation and ruin their hands have wrought.

There are, indeed, crises which determine, very frequently, the character of men forever. Randal Fox *crossed the Rubicon* when he exhibited that degree of cowardice that totally incapacitated him to fight at his country's call and in her service. Thenceforth he made war upon innocence, and sent sorrow into the homes of his own countrymen. During the time that had elapsed from the close of the war until the time of which I am writing he had adroitly succeeded in covering up his crimes; and hence, notwithstanding his cowardice exhibited in time of war, he had regained the respect, to some extent, of his fellow-citizens; but the death of Eugene Dudevant laid bare his wickedness.

A little band of revenue officers, in obedience to the demands of that law which Randal Fox had violated, surrounded his house and

demanded his person. The coward was *hemmed*, and, knowing the final result, he resisted arrest, but a ball from an officer's rifle sent the poor criminal reeling into eternity.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GRAVE ON THE LONELY MOUNTAIN-SIDE.

Those that can pity here
May, if they think it well, let fall a tear.
The subject will deserve it.

SOME weeks after the death of Eugene Dudevant I again reined up my horse in front of Tom Thaxton's humble home. Louise met me at the door. There was still a shadow over her bright face. Some fearful sorrow connected with the death of the unfortunate revenue officer was evidently burdening her heart. Her grief, observable at the "Flat," when the assassination of Dudevant was announced, was not, therefore, simply the spasmodic outburst of the sympathy of woman's pure heart, for it was long-lived.

It was a very great problem to me that Louise should mourn for this lewd fellow. But I had determined to take the matter philosophically; for had not Victor Hugo declared

that "woman is the conundrum of the nineteenth century; we cannot guess her, but we will never give her up—no, never?" And why should I wonder at any mystery that should greet me relative to that beautiful "Girl in Checks," any way; or, as to that matter, at any thing which might occur at Tom Thaxton's home? For had I been asked to have christened that humble mountain cabin, I would have called it "Labyrinthine."

My kind, though untutored, host's tongue ran smoothly along, as usual, applying practically whatever incident was alluded to, for he was wonderfully endowed with the *gift of application.*

The excitement created by the murder of Dudevant had not yet passed away, and, as a matter of course, my host must speak of it in the line of his conversation, as well as impress us again with the truth that "the way of the transgressor is hard." But when he alluded to that sad incident I noticed that the shadow on Louise's face deepened. Anon she stepped out of the room, to attend, as I supposed, to

some one of the many domestic matters that were committed to her care.

I was, however, soon left alone; for these mountaineers look upon their preacher as one of their family, and feel but little hesitancy in leaving him without entertainment when their work demands attention. I was tired and felt drowsy from the fatigue incident to the long horseback ride which I had just completed. I remembered the spout in the back yard, and determined to bathe my face in its pure waters.

When I had completed my ablutions I was seized with a desire to trace the little stream, from cascade to cascade, up to its very source. I was soon pursuing my little exploratory excursion. I kept in a well-worn foot-way, that wound along the meandering banks of the streamlet. At length, about half a mile from the house, the pathway became bifarious. I turned into the left prong, which deflected into an almost perfect semicircle, as it led me around a few immense granite bowlders, and conducted me to the topmost stone, over which

the streamlet made the longest perpendicular descent of any in its entire course.

The scene that greeted my eyes when I reached the top of the declivity was truly fascinating. The elevation was such that I was enabled to count half a dozen little Piedmont towns in the distance. Farm-houses nestled down among the leafless trees, resembling, on account of their distance, so many toy-houses. The meandering course of one of the prongs of the head-waters of the beautiful Saluda could be traced for miles; ever and anon its clear waters flashed in the sunshine like a molten current of pure silver. In the distance I could see the black columns of coal-smoke, as they belched from half a dozen massive engines on the Piedmont Air Line Railroad, resembling, as they rose into the air and expanded into a funnel-shaped cloud, so many cyclones sweeping leisurely along in the distance.

The landscape before me resembled one level plateau of table-land, and finally seemed to gradually elevate itself until it kissed the clear, blue sky. But "distance lends enchant-

ment to the view," and the far-extended landscape that stretched out before me, apparently so level, was really a broken, rugged country. But at the base of the cliffs upon which I stood there was really a plot of ground, embracing ten acres perhaps, which was perfectly level. It was one of nature's magnificent parks. The undergrowth seemed to have been cut away at some time, and the level plateau was carpeted with great bunches of a kind of winter grass indigenous to the mountains. An imposing grove of chestnut-oaks, with straight trunks and bushy tops, covered the beautiful park. Their arrow-like trunks seemed like so many columns supporting a great net-work of leafless limbs and twigs. The tops of these trees waved to and fro in their January barrenness, almost on a level with my feet. The scene to one not accustomed to look upon these lavish handiworks of God was simply enchanting.

But the creative skill of God had not only provided a feast for the eyes in this far-extended scene, but it had provided for the ear

the sweetest strains that mortals can ever hope to hear this side of the Elysian fields of heaven. It seemed that God had decreed that the voice of neither beast nor bird should vary the Æolian strains of the gurgling, soul-lulling melody of the splattering little cataract. Viewless hands, indeed, touched the strings of nature's harp, and all nature besides stood in a listening attitude. Every voice was hushed, and every thing, save the singing waters, was as silent as the tomb. I stood transfixed to the spot, scarcely daring to move hand or foot, lest I should disturb nature's harp.

The spell, however, was soon broken by a voice that made me shudder. It seemed to have come right up out of the rock upon which I was standing. I listened breathlessly; I may have been mistaken. Again it greeted my ears—half sob, half wail. In slow, measured, grief-burdened tones I heard the sentence: "O mother, mother, how lonely I am without you!"

I had believed myself to be any thing but superstitious, and yet, despite my effort to

brace up my nerves, I found that a cold, clammy perspiration was oozing from every pore of my body. And then, how out of place a groan here! Amid these sweet scenes there should be no discord. But how like life! No peaceful cottage overgrown with flowering evergreens, nor stately mansion of the rich, is exempt from the intrusions of the black-winged angel of grief.

Again the sorrow-pregnant wail greeted my ear in slow, distinct syllables. I crept noiselessly to the edge of the rock upon which I was standing, and looked down into the depths below me. The mysterious wail was no longer a mystery. There, under the very shadow of the overhanging rock upon which I was standing, was a grave. Small marble slabs, set upright in the earth, marked the head and foot of the little green mound. Louise kneeled beside it, with her hands clasped over her bosom, as if in the attitude of prayer.

When she arose from her position and stood erect I retreated, lest she should discover me. Turning quickly into the little pathway, I

walked rapidly down the towering cliff. It was not my purpose to have her know that I had seen her, for eavesdropping, no matter if our position is determined by accident, is a thing which we do not like to have known if we are guilty. Hence I walked rapidly in the direction of the house; but just as I was nearing the conjunction of the two paths, described in the beginning of this chapter, she came round a clump of hazel-bushes, meeting me, and we stood confronting each other just at the point where the two paths came together. Her face was flushed and her cheeks were tear-stained. I was embarrassed, of course, but not so completely but that I was able to feign surprise at meeting her. Who does not act the hypocrite sometimes? "I—I beg pardon, Miss Louise. I felt as if a little recreation would benefit me after my long ride. I came to inspect this beautiful cataract, not dreaming that I would find you here."

"O!" she said, interrupting my little impromptu speech, "I come here every day. This is the dearest spot to me on earth. I will be

your guide, if you will accept my service, and we will go back to the little glen at the base of the falls, named by my precious mother, before she died, the 'Last Retreat.'"

I was glad to accept her proposition, and we turned and walked up the winding pathway that led to that sacred spot, the "Last Retreat." I congratulated myself on the discovery which I had made and upon the good fortune that seemed likely to attend my tour of exploration. Could it be true that the "Mystery of the Mountain Cabin" was about to be solved?

We at length reached the grave. The plain marble head-stone bore this simple epitaph:

SACRED
TO THE MEMORY OF
ESTELLE DUDEVANT DUNBAR.
BORN JULY 15, 1835;
DIED MAY 20, 1870.
REST IN PEACE, PRECIOUS ONE;
LOUISE WATCHES YOUR GRAVE.

As I read this inscription Louise leaned heavily upon my arm, and wept as if her poor,

grief-burdened heart would break. At last she spoke: "One month ago to-day I came as usual to my mother's grave. As I approached it I heard sobs and groans. I turned back and crept to the top of yonder overhanging rock, and as I looked down upon this spot I beheld a tall, masculine form bowing over my mother's grave. He wept as if his heart were breaking. He called my mother's name and, kneeling down, he kissed the cold marble slab upon which that name is written, and then in grief-stricken tones I heard him say: 'O Estelle, Estelle, precious sister, pardon a wicked, unfeeling brother!' I was tempted to rush from my hiding-place and make myself known to him, but something — O what was it? — something restrained me. He at last threw himself into the saddle and rode away through the woods. It was Eugene Dudevant, my mother's only brother, who, in searching for the distillery which he captured just one month ago, found my mother's grave. It was the first time I ever saw him; alas! I shall never see him again. Twice my mother was driven

from home; indeed, she always seemed to be hiding from some fearful persecutor; and when she died she asked us to bury her here under the shadow of this rock. My uncle found her even here in this, the "Last Retreat," but, thanks to God, his heart had been made tender at last."

I led the weeping girl away to a moss-covered stone, and bid her be seated, and there she unfolded to me the "Mystery of the Mountain Cabin."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE VEIL LIFTED FROM THE MOUNTAIN CABIN.

Gloom is upon thy lonely hearth,
O silent house! once filled with mirth.

LOUISE'S story was an old one—as old, indeed, as the Church of God itself. True religion has ever, as the history of Christianity proves, evoked persecution in some phase or other. It is quite true that opposition has not always been bold and positive; yet hatred, in some form or other, has always manifested itself in opposition to genuine Christianity as a vital governing principle in the human heart.

The humble itinerant missionary to the slaves of South Carolina had secured from Louis Dudevant permission to visit his plantation and preach to his negroes. These faithful and self-sacrificing men preached a pure and plain gospel to the unfortunate sons of Ham.

Marm Phillis, the old nurse of Louis Dudevant's children, was a constant hearer of the missionary. Her heart had been frequently warmed and thrilled by the eloquent appeals and glad messages which the man of God delivered. She looked forward to the time of his visitations with joy and gladness. She hummed Methodistic tunes as she went about her daily work in the old Dudevant mansion; therefore her aristocratic old master, who looked upon Methodism as a religion suited peculiarly to the condition of the poor and ignorant, and as scarcely worthy of the consideration of the genteel and *elite*, frequently made jocular remarks about the zeal and devotions of his old "Methodist nurse."

But the mission of Methodism, even from Louis Dudevant's stand-point, was and is the grandest mission that the world has ever seen. Had the wealthy rice-planter turned to the eleventh chapter of the gospel recorded by St. Matthew, and there considered the climacteric arrangement of our Saviour's answer to the two disciples of John the Baptist, he might

have placed a different estimate upon the heaven-born mission of Methodism: "Go and show John again these things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Glorious climax! The grandest mission that any individual or that any Church can ever engage in is to preach the gospel to the poor, for that was the *ultimatum* of Christ's mission.

But that system of religion which was only adapted to the poor and ignorant, in the opinion of Louis Dudevant, was destined to reach farther in its permeating effects than the hearts of the sable sons of Ham. It will one day permeate the very atmosphere of the Dudevant mansion. That system of religious teaching which takes hold upon the substratum of society will finally shape the superstratum. In its progressive movements religion works upward. That which is nethermost conditions and determines that which is uppermost; therefore Christ entered society in his great ministerial work just

where society begins to lose itself in rags, disease, and poverty. Here, therefore, may be found the only true solution of the problem of the races.

Already old Marm Phillis had told, with streaming eyes, to her young mistress the comforts that the sermons of the missionary had brought to her heart. Estelle had listened with interest to the joyful experiences of the old negress. How could she doubt the utterances of her faithful old nurse? There was a vacuum in her own heart which had never been filled, though she had sat under the ministry of the ablest preachers and most renowned bishops.

Ah, *experience* is the citadel of Christianity! No insidious shaft like "Robert Elsmere" can ever penetrate or demolish this *vital* factor of religion so long as the world stands and men know their wants. The human heart almost instinctively believes that what comforts and is good for one will comfort and console another. Such naturally were Estelle's decisions as she listened to the warm, overflowing ex-

periences of Marm Phillis; yet she never dreamed that Methodism would one day be the instrument that would cause to be filled that aching void in her own bosom, and yet it was so.

Estelle sat one morning in a great cushioned easy-chair, while Marm Phillis was engaged in dusting the furniture of her young mistress's apartment. *Ennui* had seized upon the very soul of the fair young mistress of "The Oaks," and she sat brooding over the great lack of something in her heart without which life was not a pleasure. She looked up from the bright beam of sunshine that had been dancing upon the carpet, and asked: "Marm Phillis, what makes you always joyful and happy?"

The old negress's countenance beamed with the divine afflatus that filled her humble heart as she replied: "De missionary told me how to get de peace of God. I trusted Christ, an' he saves me, missus."

"He *saves* me" kept flashing through Estelle's mind, as she sat there with a heart that

was burdened to its utmost capacity. "He *saves* me"—"can it be true that she *knows* it?" she queried in her own mind. "O," thought she, "I would give the world for that knowledge, were it possible." She determined, as she sat there in the great arm-chair and almost envied the joy that seemed to fill the old slave's heart, to hear the missionary for herself.

At last the day came when service would be held by the missionary for the slaves of the Dudevant plantation. Estelle, accompanied by the overseer's wife and daughter, and her faithful old nurse and attendant, Marm Phillis, entered the little white-washed plantation chapel. It was a strange spectacle; the sable audience showed their white, ivory-like teeth between their parted lips, and nodded admiringly as their young mistress crossed the threshold of the building. The most comfortable pew was quickly vacated for the privileged party, and they were seated, Estelle for the first time in her life, to hear a Methodist preacher.

The missionary entered the crude pulpit

and began the service. He was tall, slender, clean-shaven, and neatly attired in a close-fitting black suit. He had a handsome, benevolent face; indeed, he was a veritable Methodist preacher of that day. His emphasis, enunciation, gesticulation, and general deportment and bearing were such as impress one with the fact of good breeding and cleverness. His sentences were short, simple, almost axiomatic, yet full of tenderness and pathos. As was common in that day, and which ought to be common now, the preacher discoursed upon one of the cardinal doctrines of the Holy Scriptures — "the direct witness of the Holy Spirit." As he proceeded in his discourse he grew sublimely eloquent, without losing any of the force of his logic. Estelle's eyes were riveted upon him, and her heart, like Wesley's while hearing Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, was "strangely warmed." The tears of joy and gladness streamed down her fair cheeks; she felt that the aching void in her heart had been filled by the Spirit of God, and she could now verify the sweet assurance of

which Marm Phillis had so frequently told her.

When the minister had concluded his discourse and stepped down from the crude pulpit Estelle met him, grasped his hand, and, while tears of joy streamed down her cheeks, she told him of the overflowing joy she felt in her heart. The all-cleansing blood of Jesus had washed another heart white as snow. All of Estelle's former ideas of religion had been obliterated in a moment. She now felt for the first time in her life a sympathy for all mankind. The great leveling influence of the gospel of Christ had accomplished its grand, renewing, and all-healing work. That heart, which ever afterward proved a faithful receptacle of divine truth and of the Holy Ghost, now spontaneously acknowledged one common Fatherhood, as well as one common brotherhood of humanity.

As the beautiful girl stood pressing the hand of that faithful servant of God, surrounded by scores of the ebony-hued slaves of her father, each one moved to tears of gladness on

their young mistress's account, the scene was an affecting one.

The transcendent beauty of Christianity is that it bridges every chasm, pulls down every wall, and spans every dark and unexplored valley whereby humanity is separated. It begets sympathy of that broad kind which takes in every class and condition of mankind.

But what will stern, skeptical old Louis Dudevant say when the knowledge of this wonderful transformation of his daughter's heart comes to his ear? Without thinking of the cold, skeptical nature of her father, or of the little piece of innocent indecorum of which she had been guilty by attending service in the little plantation chapel, Estelle hastened into the presence of her father, clasping him in her arms. With streaming eyes and a voice full of emotion she told him of the precious work of God in her heart.

Louis Dudevant stood aghast! He could scarcely believe his eyes or ears. Could it be possible that his daughter had so far forgotten her rearing as to violate the laws of modesty

by leaping over the very proprieties which should have restrained her, thus bringing a reproach upon the proud name of Dudevant by imbibing what he termed the frenzy and animal excitement of Methodism? Ah! he had never dreamed that his fair daughter would ever become the depository of such a religion. He thrust her from him as he would have spurned a brute, while he writhed under the wound which his pride had received. But he was helpless; he could not undo that which God had wrought. Days and weeks passed away; but his anger, instead of abating, grew on him; for Louis Dudevant had attained that age wherein such temperaments as his know no relenting or forgiveness. He was determined to conquer, even at the sacrifice of paternal love.

The missionary was summarily prohibited from ever again entering the little plantation chapel at "The Oaks." The regular inflowing of merry visitors was checked by the stern, cynic-like reception they received from Louis Dudevant, and by the declaration of Estelle's

indisposition to receive company. Thus painful weeks and months passed away; home at "The Oaks" was dying, dying forever. Eugene was in Europe; so that Louis Dudevant alone, with stern face and rigid features, paced the silent apartments of his palatial home. "*Home,*" did I say?

> He entered the house—his home no more
> (For without hearts there is no home), and felt
> The solitude of passing his own door
> Without a welcome.

Marm Phillis went noiselessly about her daily vocation, denied even the privilege of humming her favorite songs. But there was another inmate virtually confined within one of the upper chambers. Estelle was indeed an *alien* in her own father's home. Marm Phillis was the only being from whom the virtually imprisoned maiden received any sympathy. But amid her severest agonies there was a source of never-failing consolation more glorious indeed than those comforting influences which spring from a consciousness on the part of the sufferer that they have the sympathies

of their fellow-beings, for the Spirit of God was there.

Time and again the beautiful girl had implored an interview with her father. The fair prisoner for Christ's sake loved her only parent fervently, and to effect a reconciliation was willing to make any sacrifice save that of giving up her sincere trust in Christ. But the inflexible father turned away from her entreaties, and expressly declared that unless his daughter turned completely away from those principles of religion which she had imbibed, and again became the fair belle of every ball at "The Oaks" and elsewhere—the free, cheerful, pleasure-seeking maiden of the past—she must remain contented forever with the environments which her own folly had imposed upon her—an *alien* in her father's home. Such were the bitter threats with which all of her entreaties were met. She must *fill a tomb* while yet alive, and live a *living death.*

The proposition was one at which every impulse of nature rebelled. The beautiful prisoner could never consent to sacrifice the truth

of divinely-begotten convictions; neither did she deem it a duty to bow, since she was a woman of lawful age, to the unyielding and oppressive demand of her father, which grew, primarily, out of that pride which was begotten solely by his position in society, so-called. Hence Estelle determined to step out from under the shadow of the paternal roof, and face the problem of making a living for herself and with the labors of her own hands. That determination was executed, and that, too, without compromising the principles of that holy cause which had been planted within her heart. For under such circumstances one is justified in thrusting into the background home, the tender ties of relationship, and, indeed, every thing sublunary, for the sake of that One who has within himself endured so much for us.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ADVENT INTO THE WORLD.

Farewell, my home, my home no longer now,
Witness of many a calm and happy day;
And thou, fair eminence, upon whose brow
Dwells the last sunshine of the evening ray.

MARM PHILLIS had carried a heavy heart since Estelle had made known to her the determination to leave the paternal roof; while Louis Dudevant had shown no signs of relenting in his severe and almost inhuman course.

Estelle ascertained that Tony, the old plantation boatman, would in a few days make his monthly trip down the great Pee Dee to historic old Georgetown. This was Estelle's opportunity, and she firmly decided to use it.

When, therefore, the day arrived for the departure of the boat she walked down from her room and going into the presence of her father boldly announced to him, for the last time, her intention of leaving the home of her child-

hood unless he would consent to grant her that love and respect a child might justly demand from her parent.

The proud, stern father looked for a moment into her beautiful face, and there he read a fixed determination plainly written in every lineament of her countenance. One of three things he ought to have known would now necessarily take place: the proud father must retract his course of harsh and cruel treatment, use physical force in restraining his daughter from her purpose, or lose her forever from his palatial home.

He was too proud and unyielding to acknowledge a fault, even if he were led to see his error. He could not stoop to physical restraint, for he laid some claim to being an old-school gentleman, so that the last course alone was left him.

His pride was wounded, and there was no balm to heal the ugly scar; hence he drew his tall form up to its height, frowned a bitter, sarcastic smile, and bid his only daughter begone from his presence forever.

Estelle therefore stepped out from under the shadow of her father's home to share the bitterness of the cold, unsympathizing world—a living example of the immortal sentiments of the sweet singer of Methodism when he sung:

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave, and follow thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shalt be.
Perish, every fond ambition,
All I've sought, or hoped, or known;
Yet how rich is my condition!
God and heaven are still my own."

By the way of Georgetown and through the "City by the Sea," she reached Columbia. She was not an entire stranger in the quiet old capital on the Congaree, and therefore determined to visit at once an acquaintance and make known her condition. But there is a special providence that shapes the destiny of every child of God.

She had scarcely left the threshold of the old "South Carolina Depot," when she met the missionary who had so often preached to her

father's slaves and had been instrumental in her conversion.

He who had sympathized with the poor, degraded negro to that degree that he was humble enough to receive an appointment from the bishop to the slaves of his native State, teaching them the way of life in obedience to the wishes and plans of the immortal Capers, was certainly sympathetic enough to protect and befriend Estelle Dudevant, one of his spiritual children.

When she related to him her sorrowful experience he immediately conducted her to the home of one of his friends, and there obtained for her the situation of governess of the children of this plain Methodist family. In her new home she was happy, notwithstanding the bitter trials of her life.

She had indeed counted all things as but dross for the inestimable privilege of serving Christ the Lord, and in return God had rewarded her faith with the abundant bestowal of the riches of his grace and Holy Spirit. It is true that, viewing her from a human

stand-point, her acts may have been open to criticism; but when looked at from a divine point of view she was truly wise in all she did. Through a life of keenest self-denials and bitterest cross-bearings she reached the crown.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A WIDOW DRIVEN FROM HOME.

Peace hath her victories,
No less renowned than war.

ESTELLE was employed in the home of Archie Grant as governess. This was a humiliating position for a Dudevant, but the conquests of divine grace are mightier and grander in every way than the victories gained by human strength and through the prowess of earthly powers and equipage.

When the Confederate forces invaded Pennsylvania General Lee could not hope to keep his communications open to the rear; hence his staff officers said: "In every battle we fight we must capture as much ammunition as we use." Thus cut off from the store-houses of the rear, the invasion was necessarily self-sustaining. So it is with the soul consecrated to God. The great supply stores of the past are forever closed, and the devoted child of God

feels his utter present dependence on the sustaining power of God's grace. The victories won equip for still greater achievements.

Although Estelle had left so comfortable a home, together with all the dear associations of former days, she was happy in her new relationship. In the pious family of Archie Grant she had every help conducive to godliness.

It is true that her position was a trying one; for God has never promised to lead his children out by a way in which there are no trials and crosses. The cross and the crown are inseparably linked together. Through the fellowship of suffering the true child of God is lifted into the immediate presence of the world's Cross-bearer. "In his name" and "for his sake" are written in living characters over every trial and every crushing sorrow that are thrown across his or her pathway. These magic sentences transform crosses into crowns, and raise the humble believer into the fullest sympathy with the great life-work of our exalted Redeemer. God does not keep his

children from trouble, but he keeps them in all the trials and calamities incident to this preparatory existence. "As he is, so are we in this world." Whatever sorrows, therefore, may have filled the heart of devoted Estelle on account of being disowned and disinherited by a cruel and hard-hearted father, there was, nevertheless, to her a stream of never-failing consolation flowing continually from the sweet, soul-refreshing promises of God's word.

When the martyrly young woman had stepped out from under the shadow of the paternal roof at "The Oaks," the cruel frown of a father resting like a black storm-cloud hanging over a drooping flower upon her head, there was nothing left her save her unshaken confidence in the bare word of her Father above. But was not that enough? Had not the Saviour of men spoken definitely when he said: "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life?"

When the persecuted "child of a King" entered upon her duties as governess in the home of Archie Grant had not God even then paid her one hundred cents on the dollar? Had he not given her a home and a father and mother minus persecution and frowns? Had he not surrounded her with the very sunshine of heaven?

Amid the genial Christian influences which God had thrown around her she felt, therefore, a satisfaction which can only be appreciated by those who have trodden the rugged pathway of pungent sorrow, and who have found it suddenly illuminated by the rays of divine light which have penetrated the fast gathering clouds and which have come down with their mellow, dove-like descent and soul-cheering splendor upon the grief-burdened heart.

It would be uninteresting, perhaps, to trace the entire history of Estelle Dudevant while an inmate of this quiet, Christian home. It is enough to say that she remained uncompromisingly loyal to her God,

and day by day she was supremely happy in his service.

Just a year prior to the great civil struggle between the States she was married to a young merchant in the capital city—Clarence Dunbar. One child, the winsome Louise, was the fruit of this union.

The call for volunteers in defense of Southern rights came. Clarence Dunbar was a patriotic son of Carolina. He felt his country's need, and gave himself to her service.

It was a sad scene, indeed, when the young captain pressed his loving wife and prattling infant to his heaving bosom for the last time, a scene—and may it never be repeated!—which occurred in many homes, North and South.

Alas! one year after that event Clarence Dunbar, leading forward his men, fell in the thickest of the fight. A soldier of the "Valley Campaign," they buried him,

Far up the lonely mountain-side,

in the still hours of the night,

His coffin but the mountain soil,
His shroud Confederate gray.

Ah! sad coincident! as I sat listening to Louise's melancholy story I took it in; there was another "Last Retreat," a few hundred miles away on the steep declivities of this great mountain-range—a Confederate soldier's grave.

> What fights he fought, what wounds he wore,
> Are all unknown to fame;
> Remember, on his lonely grave
> There is not e'en a name.

But God has recorded his victories and watches his last resting-place, therefore

> Roll, Shenandoah, proudly roll, adown thy rocky glen;
> Above thee lies the grave of one of Stonewall Jackson's men.

In the fair capital of Carolina a brave soldier's wife anxiously awaited tidings from the bloody battle-field. Tidings came, but only to clothe her in the mantle of mourning. She wept and kissed through her tears the smiling infant. She struggled amid sorrow and want for three years.

The storm-cloud of war grew blacker and yet blacker. Onward came the vast column

of blue. Atlanta, the great store-house of the Southern Confederacy, fell. Carolina's fair yet hated capital was doomed.

The frail, sorrowing widow, with true woman's instinct, apprehended the fearful ravages of that enemy before which her beloved Clarence had fallen; hence, as the black and smoking trail of Tecumseh Sherman neared Columbia, upon which he had determined to pour all of his pent-up hate, she fled to a place of safety.

Onward the creaky old train bore the sorrowful soldier's wife and child, until, as the sun began to sink behind the western hills, the dim outlines of the far-famed Blue Ridge loomed up against the far-away horizon. Having reached at last the terminus of the railroad, the grief-burdened mother pressed onward by private conveyance. Like the trembling roe of the forest, chased by yelping hounds, this sorrow-smitten child of God sought some mountain nook to hide herself away from the apparently ever-pursuing train of disaster. That quiet resting-place she found in the home

of Tom Thaxton, and at last beneath the overshadowing rocks of the "Last Retreat."

The mystery of the mountain cabin is solved. Will the providence of God evolve justice for the beautiful "Girl in Checks?"

CHAPTER XIX.

A BACKWOODS DIVINE ON BAPTISM.

THE second visit to Tom Thaxton's had lifted that veil of mystery which hung over his humble home, but the third stop at his hospitable board brought news of approaching conflict. The deep mutterings of the gathering hosts of "Hard-shells" had already proclaimed the very near approach of battle.

I had, as a loyal Methodist preacher, incidentally spoken of the duty of infant baptism in my last sermon at the "Flat," and now the very atmosphere was rife with tumult and flying missiles.

"Baptism is a sign and a seal of God's covenant with his people. Our children either belong to that covenant or they do not. If they do not, then their salvation is impossible. But that they do is specifically and directly revealed. 'The promise is unto you and to your

children.' If, therefore, they belong to that covenant, they have a right to both the sign and seal of that covenant, and none should dare withhold it from them."

This was the utterance that I had made relative to infant baptism, and I had remarked also relative to the mode of baptism: "John the Baptist sprinkled the multitudes that flocked to the baptism of repentance, and that sprinkling, or affusion, was the mode of baptism under the apostolic dispensation amounted to a clear and undeniable demonstration. For supposing John the Baptist to have baptized by immersion, it would have taken many months to have baptized all who came to his baptism. He had no assistance whatever. Therefore can we believe that he stood waist-deep in the cold waters of the Jordan for that length of time? Would such not have been an impossibility? Would it not have been death to John?

"Again, that he baptized by affusion, or sprinkling, is positively revealed. John said: 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repent-

ance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.' (Matt. iii. 11.)

"Now there is quite a difference in baptizing *in* water and *with* water, but it is specifically revealed that John baptized *with* water.

"Again, it must be admitted that whatever is the meaning of the word *baptize* in the first clause of the text, that also is the meaning of the same word in the last clause of the text?

"Now St. Luke in the eleventh chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, fifteenth and sixteenth verses, tells us definitely what the meaning of the word is in the last clause of the text relative to the *mode* of baptism: "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost *fell* upon them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Therefore not even the death of Christ for the sins of the world is more positively revealed than the *mode* of baptism.

These deliverances of mine had set all that mountain region aflame with controversy. As I reined up in front of Tom Thaxton's gate the first object that I saw was his tall, angular form approaching me from the barn. "They are arter you," he said as he came within speaking distance. "Parson Pondduck says there an't no covenant now. He 'lowed las' Sunday in his sarmon ove' at B'ilin' Springs that God did make a covenant with Abraham, an' that that was all the covenant God had ever made; an' he said that covenant had been dead too long to talk about. He said the Bible wa'n't no covenant nohow, but a testament, an' he showed us that 'Testament' was printed on the back of his Bible."

I must confess that I was at a loss to know what argument my opponent would make of this, hence I listened with the greatest interest as my humble parishioner rehearsed the utterances of this backwoods divine: "'Now,' sez ee, 'why does God call the Bible a testament? Beca'se it testifies to what we must do to be saved. Don't it tell us that if Christ washed

his disciples' feet, we ought to wash one another's feet?' It was foot-washin' day over at B ilin' Springs las' Sunday, you know. I think folks oughter wash their feet, but 'pears powerful strange to me that they wait till they get to the church to do it. Tell you what, 'twas a powerful sight to see 'em scrubbin' away there in the church. Mary Jane Jackson—that's a member over at the "Flat," you know—got up close for to see, an' spread down her Sunday shawl for the baby to sleep on, an' Deacon Jones turned over a foot-tub of water on the chile an' shawl. That chile's a Methodist shoar as Betsy is my old 'oman's name. 'Pear'd to me you might 'a' hearn that baby holler frum here clean to the "Flat." But as I was a-sayin' 'bout the sarmon, sez ee: 'Don't the Bible testify that our Saviour went down into the river Jordan? Don't it testify that "thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness?" Now I would like to know how,' sez ee, 'a little baby is a-goin' down into the water an' a-comin' up outen the water.' O you just oughter been thar! He's done

funeralized all the Christians—Methodist, Missionary Baptist, an' all 'ceptin' them that's Hard-shells."

This short preface, delivered as he stood holding my bridle-reins, was enough to lead me to believe that there was a treat in store for me after supper. I felt assured that I would learn much of polemic theology before the time came to stow me away in the little back room for the night. And O how my heart yearned for the enlightening influences of education and the gospel of Christ to be spread over these dark coves and frowning peaks!

Is it at all surprising that the Mormon elder on his missionary, or rather proselyting, tours through these benighted regions should make converts to his abominable creed? Nay, verily!

So after supper was over I asked my host to give me a synopsis of Parson Pondduck's sermon.

"O he didn't say nuthin" bout them big fureign words, for you know he's an onlarnt

man. But he 'lowed he wer'nt afraid of some preachers who had rubbed their back agin a college wall, if they did have a prophet's name. Sez ee: 'My larnin' an' wisdom comes down from above, an' all I have to do to preach the everlastin' gospel is to open my mouth and the Holy Ghost fills it.'"

Here Betsy Thaxton chimed in: "Well, if the Holy Ghost put them words into Parson Pondduck's mouth, he must 'a' been funnin'; fur anybody that reads the Scriptur' knows that it did not sound like Scriptur' doctrine."

This apparently irreverent remark was certainly to the point. I was ready to believe with her that the ever blessed Spirit of truth would in nowise own such mutilations of the Holy Book.

Her remark served one purpose, however: it gave Tom Thaxton time to fill and light the old clay pipe that had, to all appearances, done many days' honest labor.

Thus equipped, my host gave me a reproduction of that part of Parson Pondduck's sermon which touched especially upon the

doctrine of baptism and "the final perseverance of the saints."

As nearly as I can reproduce it on paper it ran something like this:

"'O my breethren, I went out behind my garden fur to pray er, an' while I wus a-prayin' er I hearn somethin' a-comin' along through the woods te-tip-e-te-tip er, te-tip-e-te-tip er; an' what do you reckon it wus er? A poor little fawn er. On it went er, down towards the river er, te-tip-e-te-tip er, te-tip-e-te-tip er, an' ker-splunge it went into that liquid grave er, an' straight it went to the tother side er, safe er, O my breethren, safe er. Then I hearn somethin' a comin' along to-bow-wow-wow, to-bow-wow-wow er. An' O my breethren, what do you reckon that wus er? It wus Bill Davis's old hound. Tige er, close on trail of that poor little fawn er. He went on down to the cold water's aige er, to-bow-wow-wow er, to-bow-wow-wow er, but he could not stem that cold current er. He ran up an' down the bank er, to-bow-wow-wow er, etc. Now, my breethren, what does all this mean er? Why

the little fawn is the poor sinner er. He comes along, te-tip-e-te-tip er, te-tip-e-te-tip er, an' ker-splunge he goes down into the cold, watery grave er, an' out on the other side er, safe er. O yes, my breethren, safe er, that's the word, safe er. Old Satan, like Bill Davis's old Tige er, comes along close on his trail er, to-bow-wow-wow er, to-bow-wow-wow er; but O my breethren, he can't stem that cold current er, he just runs up an' down the bank er, to-bow-wow-wow er, to-bow-wow-wow er, safe er; yes, that's the word, safe er, forevermore er. Now, my breethren, we uns are the onliest ones that have done as God's word testifies we should do, an' we uns alone can expect to be saved er, beca'se we have come out from among them er, an' we have thusly left the devil on the other side er. Safe er. O yes, my breethren, safe er.'"

Such, indeed, were the Ciceronian cadences which my remarks on baptism had evoked. I had disturbed the peace of Zion, and had been left, therefore, on the other side in company with old Tige as a punishment for my

very untimely deliverances on the subject of water baptism. But I am glad to know that I had a defender present on that occasion in the person of Sallie Flinn.

"Well you just oughter hearn the argufying after the sarmon was over. Some was almost fightin' mad. I didn't say a word, but it 'peared to me that Satan would be powerful glad to have a chance to plunge into that cold stream. Me an' Parson Pondduck rid off together, bein' that we went the same road. I didn't let on that his sarmon hurt me at all. So we came on a-talkin' 'bout the craps an' one thing an' other, till 'fore long we overtuck Sallie Flinn. I seed Sallie was as mad as a wet hen. I know'd Sallie, and know'd Parson Pondduck was goin' to ketch it. Sez I: 'Howdy Sallie, how's all?' She 'lowed: 'We uns are all well, 'ceptin' Bill Davis's old Tige is close on our trail, an' we han't quite made up our minds to jump into the liquid grave.' Sez she: 'I always knowed old Tige was powerful bad after sheep, but I never yet hearn of a sheep a-takin' water, if a poor little fawn did.' An'

sez she: 'Parson Pondduck, you have added to the Scriptur' to-day, an' I'd hate to be in your shoes. For the Bible says all them plagues mentioned in Revelation is goin' to be added to you. An' mor'n that, the Bible says the devil is like a roarin' lion, but you said he was like Bill Davis' old suck-egg hound. If I thought the devil was as 'feard of me as old Tige, I'd rest mighty easy in this world, I tell you. I could slap my hands and run him outen a hundred-acre field. An' mor'n that, what you said wa'n't in the Scriptur.' I don't know what Sallie was a-goin' to say, for when she said that Parson Pondduck laid whip to his old bone-stack, an' went pacing over the hill like a greased streak of lightnin'. He know'd he couldn't hold no han' with Sallie, for she's one of 'em as shoar as you live. She'll be at the "Flat" to-morrow, an' she'll want you to pitch into the Parson, but if I were you I wouldn't pay no 'tention to him. No good ever comes of argufying, nohow."

The good advice of my host was easily kept. I declined answering the backwoods divine.

Yet I wondered why the Holy Spirit had never moved the hearts of devoted men and women to enter these dark valleys, bringing with them a purer word of life than that which prevailed. But God in his mysterious providence had sent one missionary here, and her body rests in the "Last Retreat," and as we shall see, she "being dead yet speaketh."

When I retired for the night it was to dream over fleeing fawns and chasing hounds. But little did I imagine that a deer-chase would soon have much to do in restoring the rights of Louise and 'Cinda, yet it was so.

CHAPTER XX.

A NEW-FASHIONED SHIRT AND A DEER-CHASE.

Why weep faint-hearted and forlorn, when evil comes
to try us?
The fount of hope wells ever nigh; 'twill cheer us
with a quaff;
And when the gloomy phantom of despondency stands
by us,
Let us, in calm defiance, exorcise it with a laugh.

MY backwoods opponent was evidently a hydropathist, and his strictures on his *homespun* science of hydrology had at least wrought one beneficial result—it had exercised to their utmost capacity my risible functions. No wonder, therefore, that I slept so soundly after retiring that it was necessary for my host to enter my room about eight o'clock, Saturday morning, for the purpose of reminding me that I had an appointment for that day at the "Flat."

Having grown more familiar with me, through an association of several months, he

not only took the liberty of entering my apartment, but, taking hold of me with vise-like grip, he gave my body a vigorous shake, thus tearing me completely away from the arms of Morpheus, and at the same time informing me that it was "nigh onto time for to eat a bite." He seemed determined not only to arouse me from my slumbers, but to remain with me until I was ready for the "spout." The arrangement of my toilet was to him an item of considerable interest. While I adjusted my collar and cuffs he remarked: "Well, did I ever! I never saw a shirt before that you could take to pieces an' put together ag'in 'thout bein' sewed. An', would you b'lieve it, it's one of them kind that opens in the back. I've hearn about them kind before. Parson Pondduck got hold o' one down at the baptizin' at Jones's mill-pond, an' got it on wrong. I tell you it caused a sight o' merriment amongst the youngsters."

Knowing that there was a laugh in store for me that would shake off the last bit of drowsiness, I inquired how it was.

"Well, you see, they had a baptizin' down at Brother Jones's mill-pond, after preachin' at Long Branch. 'Pears powerful curious that they name all their meetin'-houses after the water-courses, don't it? But, as I was goin' for to say, the parson, when he got down to the pond, saw that he had forgot to fetch a suit of clothes for to change, an' them he had on were his Sunday ones. So he had to borrow a suit from Billy Jones. Billy, you know, is always up to some prank. So off he goes to the house an' fetches his Sunday shirt an' pants; that was all the clothes the parson wanted. Billy is a powerful heavy-sot, chunky fellow, you know, an' the parson is an oncommonly long man. They say Billy's shirt an' pants looked a sight on him. Billy let him have his Sunday shirt. As I said, it was one he'd bought outen the store down at Greenville, an' it opened in the back like yourn. Parson Pondduck, 'pears, never had seen nor hearn tell of them kind o' shirts, an' when he put it on he buttoned it in front. As I said, he didn't have on any coat, nor galluses nuther. It

stuck powerful close to his breast, an' humped up oncommonly high on his back. When he come down to the pond with Billy's breeches a-comin' 'bout to his knees, an' that starched shirt-bosom a-puffin' up on his back, they say he were a funny sight. They say when the parson would stoop down for to put 'em under the water it 'pear'd like he was plum disj'inted, an' the fore part a-stickin' so close to his chest made him look like he would break clean in two."

And so the sight must have been an amusing one indeed. I do not know what further comment my host may have made on the parson's attire, for just then I began to adjust a pair of cuff-supporters, and they took his eye as something altogether novel. Being also a little stoop-shouldered, having caused it by carelessness relative to bodily carriage, and, being yet young, I had determined, if possible, to remedy that defect in my form; hence I was in the act of adjusting my shoulder-brace when my host's eyes dilated with large wonder as he remarked: "Well, I never saw

so many trappin's on one man before. You shoarly feel like Parson Pondduck looked; you mus' be afeard you'll come onj'inted."

I was not a little amused, I must confess, at my host's remarks. But when I had completed my toilet, and had bathed at the spout, breakfast was announced; and there, I must say, I was considerably embarrassed as my host facetiously declared to the family that "Our little preacher has got on his harness, an' is ready for to pitch into Parson Pondduck."

As ridiculous as was this homespun sally, it was instrumental in causing me to lay aside the shoulder-brace forever, and to determine ever afterward to work without *harness*.

After breakfast we sat awhile on the little back piazza, listening to hounds yelping in the distance. It was a deer-chase, and the course which the agile animal was taking could be distinctly traced by the sound of the yelping pack, as it floated out on the calm, clear atmosphere of that beautiful September morning.

But it will prove to be a *lucky* chase. It

will be instrumental in restoring rights forgotten and in setting aright wrongs that were deliberate and premeditated.

There is indeed a divine *special* providence over all of God's children. "For we know," declares the great apostle to the Gentiles, "that all things work together for good to them that love God."

> Behind the dim unknown
> Standeth God within the shadow,
> Keeping watch above his own.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CAMP-HUNT, AND HOW IT TERMINATED.

NOTHING, perhaps, in the line of outdoor sports gives more real enjoyment and yields more pleasurable recreation than a camp-hunt in the mountains. It is an old custom in South Carolina. Low-country men frequently visit the mountains, and spend weeks under canvas. The pure atmosphere of the great Appalachian chain, the savory venison, the delicious trout, together with the outdoor exercise incident to such a trip, lend to it many fascinations.

A party of hunters had, at the time of which I write, pitched their tent in the beautiful valley extending along the base of Table Rock. The hounds to which we had been listening belonged to the persons composing this camp. The leading spirit of this little band of hunters was Wilbur Legrand. He was a descendant of one among the oldest and best Huguenot

families in Lower Carolina. He had completed his education a year previous to the incident about which I am writing. He had returned to his home, after receiving his diploma, just in time to witness the death of his father. That sad event left him—he being the only child, and his mother having died several years previous—sole heir to the old homestead, which joined the broad fields of the unfortunate Eugene Dudevant—"The Oaks." Wilbur Legrand was thus left alone in the world, and the camp-hunt of which we have spoken was somewhat the result of his loneliness. He had, in company with a number of associates, determined to seek recreation in this way.

On the morning of which we speak Wilbur Legrand had placed himself at the head of the valley, in a narrow ravine, close to a large spring of pure water. This was a point by which the deer generally passed in their flight from the valley to a safe retreat among the towering crags. It was only a few hundred yards from Tom Thaxton's dwelling. The

spring by which he stood was the one from which the Thaxton family secured drinking-water.

The handsome young hunter took his stand, and eagerly watched for the form of the flying deer. The exciting yelp of the hounds came nearer and yet nearer. Every nerve of the young hunter now quivered with excitement. He looked steadily down the ravine, expecting every moment to catch sight of the large antlers of the bounding buck; but alas! just as the game was almost in sight the panting animal changed its course, and the yelp of the hounds grew fainter and yet fainter as they receded toward the western side of the valley. Disappointed and provoked, the young hunter stretched at full length upon one of the moss-covered rocks by the spring, and listened for a shot from some more fortunate member of the party. As he lay there in a listening attitude the reaction of the nervous system precipitated him into a dreamy reverie. He was aroused, however, from this semi-conscious state by sounds in the distance. Could it be

that the hounds were returning? He grasped his gun and sprung to his feet, but when he had shaken the dreamy slumber from his person he realized that the approaching sound came from human lips. He listened; it was the sweetest voice that had ever greeted his ears. Nearer and yet nearer it came; he stood spell-bound by the mellifluous symphonies. Now he could distinguish the air, and now the words:

An exile from home, splendor dazzles in vain;
O give me my lowly thatched cottage again.
The birds singing gayly that come to my call—
Give me them, with the peace of mind dearer than all.

Home! home! sweet, sweet home!
There's no place like home! there's no place like home!

It was the second stanza of John Howard Payne's immortal song.

Now he caught the first glimpse of the sweet songstress through the heavy timber and thick foliage on the mountain-side, down which she was coming. In one hand she carried a rude wooden bucket, and in the other a jar of milk, to be deposited in the crude old

mossy spring-house. The young hunter was enraptured as he gazed on the lovely form slowly and gracefully descending the mountain-side. Her exquisite beauty was as enchanting as the sweet strains flowing from her ruby lips, which were taken up and rolled back in echoes by a score of towering mountains. As he looked upon the unadorned beauty of Louise Dunbar, *alias* Thaxton, clad in her coarse mountain garb, he spontaneously ejaculated: "Give me the pure lily from the clefts of the rocky mountain's side, whose first love is my own."

Their eyes met for the first time. The slight embarrassment incident to so sudden a meeting was soon dispelled by that grace and suavity of manner which love begets. Need I say more? Does not the reader understand?

We were still sitting in the little back piazza when Louise returned from the spring, accompanied by Wilbur Legrand. She walked by his side, blushing at every step, while he carried in one hand the huge, double-barreled

deer-gun, and in the other a pail of pure water from the mountain spring. The indications were plain enough—Cupid had made incurable wounds, and Wilbur Legrand would pluck the lily from the rocky cleft of the mountain-side.

One year after the event just recorded there was a dual wedding in Tom Thaxton's humble cabin. Legrand plucked the mountain lily; and George Duvall, one of Legrand's dearest friends, and a companion also in that camp-hunt, claimed 'Cinda Houston, "one o' the best o' the 'oman kind," as Abe Grimshaw would say, as his bride.

'Cinda Houston's property was restored through Louise, it having passed into her hands at the death of Eugene Dudevant, who held it by mortgage.

Louise Legrand lives at "The Oaks," and George Duvall, having purchased Wilbur Legrand's old homestead, resides there, so that 'Cinda and Louise are near neighbors still.

Honest Tom Thaxton and his devoted wife sleep in the "Last Retreat," under the shad-

ow of the great rocks; so there are three graves there now.

Two magnificent summer residences are being built—one on the site of Sam Houston's old building, overlooking the beautiful valley of the Oolenoi; and another on the spot which Tom Thaxton's humble cabin formerly occupied, that property having been willed to Louise by Tom Thaxton before he died.

Methodism is the religion of these two homes; and now the dark mantle of ignorance has been lifted from the community around the "Flat," and the Rose of Sharon is blooming on the rugged mountain-side.

Parson Pondduck has sought the deep forests of Transylvania as the field for his polemic battles. May peace attend his efforts! Right *has* triumphed. There is a *special providence.*

THE END.